Masterson

THE DOBLEYS

The Dobleys

By

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PREFACE

THE Dobleys appeared within the current year as a series of Sunday stories written for the New York *Sun* and were not originally intended for book purposes. They have proved very popular, attaining a plentiful and delightful tribute of home approval, evidenced in many letters, all commending the Dobleys. This gratifying fireside vogue was unexpected and unaimed at by the writer. It can only be explained by the fact that the sketches present a condition somewhat daring and unusual to touch upon in these modern days—that of domestic happiness, so generally relegated to the extinct fashions. This may be the reason for the place which the Dobleys have found in the bosom of the American family.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE DOBLEYS

MR. DOBLEY HIRES A COOK

MRS. DOBLEY gazed helplessly over the chafing-dish at her husband. They were breakfasting quite informally, owing to the fact that the cook had been discharged the preceding afternoon, at Mr. Dobley's request. "For my part," said Mrs. Dobley, "I always believe in waiting until one has secured another girl. It is a dreary thing to have to breakfast on scrambled eggs and rolls and coffee with nothing better in sight for a week."

"What nonsense," said Mr. Dobley. "You can put an advertisement in the paper and have a hundred and one cooks to choose from in the morning!"

"That's just the trouble!" said his wife. "If they only wouldn't come in schools like whales and porpoises it wouldn't be so dreadful! They come a dozen at a time, and begin to ask questions until you don't quite know if they are hir-

ing you, or you are engaging them. You see I've been through it, and you haven't. After all, Belinda wasn't so bad!"

"Now look here, Honora. You had to admit that she never had anything on time?"

"She was late occasionally."

"She broke dishes?"

"Yes; she did destroy some of the china and glass."

"She lost silver and ruined the table linen in the laundry. I'm quoting your own words, Honora."

"Oh, yes; she was a little careless."

"She not only generously sampled the decanters on the sideboard, but she insisted on filling them up with water when she had imbibed most of their original contents."

"Oh, all cooks drink. You can't expect impossibilities!"

"She fought with the butcher's boys and all the different tradesmen until they refused to serve us."

"Belinda had a quick temper."

"We had agreed to put up with all these trifling irregularities; but when she reached a point that she felt it her right to stand at the head of the kitchen stairs armed with a chopping-knife and a rolling-pin threatening the other servants and

daring me to disarm her, why, I considered it was about time to call a halt."

"To call a policeman, you mean," suggested Mrs. Dobley. "I don't see why you made such a dreadful time over it. The idea of having a patrol-wagon come up to our door!"

"I have yet to see the day," said Mr. Dobley, "when I would lay my hand upon a woman, no matter what her station in life might be. I regard Belinda, from what I have heard of her, as being too fiery and untamed for domestic use. Personally, I wouldn't know her if I saw her; but I cannot see, in selecting these people, why you do not go more by facial characteristics; study up Lombroso—look at their ears and their foreheads, and take their measure, as it were."

"Cooks all look exactly alike! They are all large, aggressive, patronizing, and impertinent. They ask all sorts of questions, and they snap one up like dragons if they are questioned at all. I confess I'm afraid of them."

"Oh, this servant-girl question! This servant-girl question!" exclaimed Mr. Dobley. "If only they had men to deal with! The trouble with all you women is that you begin by being too conciliatory. You should be haughty and domineering. That's the only sort of thing that goes with that particular species. It cows them at once.

It is like taming a wild beast by looking it firmly in the eye."

"Well, I never should look a wild beast in the eye, or even a mouse—I'd run!" confessed Mrs. Dobley; "and that's the way I feel about cooks."

"You should bring auto-hypnotism into play," said Dobley. "It's very simple. Make up your mind to control them. Then you have 'em!"

"I don't understand those things," said Mrs. Dobley. "I don't see why you didn't come downstairs and hypnotize Belinda?"

"She had a chopping-knife with her. Metal counteracts the hypnotic current. But I'll give you an instance. Look directly in my eyes, Mrs. Dobley."

Mrs. Dobley looked at him intently, and Dobley made passes in the air with his hands over the table while Mrs. Dobley watched him in amazement. "Look at me!" he commanded, snapping his fingers.

"I am looking at you just as hard as I can," said Mrs. Dobley.

"Pass the butter," said Dobley. Mrs. Dobley did so. "The rolls!" shouted Dobley—"the eggs—the toast!"

"There is no toast," said Mrs. Dobley.

"There!" said Dobley triumphantly. "If you only had kept your mind fastened on the sub-

ject and your eye on mine, you would have been completely hypnotized."

"I looked around for the toast," said Mrs. Dobley.

"But in the hypnotic state you'd have handed me the first thing near you under the impression that it *was* toast. It's obtaining control of the mind of the subject. Now, when you engage a cook——"

"Suppose you engage her?" suggested Mrs. Dobley, "because you understand the system so much better than I. Just put your hypnotic powers in play and get us a real good one."

"Oh—well now—it's a little out of my department, don't you think so?" asked Dobley, weakening visibly.

"That's just like a man," said Mrs. Dobley. "You tell us how simple it is to manage domestic affairs and give us systems and all that, but you back out when it comes to tackling the matter actually."

"Oh, I'll get you a cook if that's the way you feel about it," protested Dobley lightly. "Where do you find 'em. At the department stores or in the florist shops? Do they come in a box or by the bunch?"

"There is the intelligence office that I usually go to," said Mrs. Dobley, giving him a card.

"It's safer to see them there because they are more tame in the intelligence offices than when they get you alone somewhere."

"Ha—ha—ha!" laughed Mr. Dobley. "What a ridiculous idea! You speak of 'em as though they were tigers and lions. Well, I'm fond of sport. I'll stop on my way down and lasso one for you."

By the time Dobley reached the intelligence office he had dropped his air of lightsome gayety for one of deep resolve, and had assumed an especially severe expression which he considered would quell any of the symptoms his wife had mentioned as being part of the cook character. The office seemed to Dobley to be as full of females as a Broadway candy shop after a matinée. He was the only man in sight, and he experienced a sort of stage fright when he felt the numerous pairs of eyes fastened on him. But he quickly pulled himself together when he thought of how Mrs. Dobley would chaff him if he failed.

"I—er—wish to engage a domestic?" he said to the trim young woman at the desk as she looked him over with a suspicious gray eye.

"Housekeeper, nurse, wet-nurse, kitchen-maid, cook, waitress, upstairs girl, or lady's maid?" she rattled out.

"Just a cook," said Dobley.

"Two dollars, please," she said, and Dobley paid the money and walked as directed into a small room papered in blue roses and carpeted in red and orange. There were a chair and a settee, and he hesitated, wondering if etiquette demanded that he should occupy the more important chair. Then he recollected what Mrs. Dobley had said about cooks being all very ponderous, and he abandoned the settee and took the chair. Then he found himself laughing at the room, which he fancied illustrated in a colored supplement and labelled as an artistic nightmare. Suddenly the door opened and Dobley started. A most uncooklike person, magnificently jetted, entered simpering kittenishly. As she sat down she dropped her gloves, handkerchief, and pocketbook, which Dobley picked up for her.

"You are looking for a housekeeper?" she said, throwing her eyes coquettishly at him.

"A cook," said Dobley apologetically. It seems as though he ought to be looking for a housekeeper.

"Of course I can cook," she said, with a languishing glance; "but I'm always treated as one of the family. You see, if I hadn't lost my husband, I never'd had to work. It's hard to be thrown on the world."

"It is, indeed," said Dobley.

"It's a cruel thing to have to face a bleak existence alone," she went on, touching her eyes with her handkerchief and sniffling, "so I thought the place would suit. Are you a bachelor or a widow gentleman?"

"Neither," said Dobley, stammering.

"Oh! Domestic trouble, I suppose?" she said. "Well, it's common enough now, goodness knows! Some of the women don't seem to know when they get a good man. Do you like music?"

"Extremely," said Dobley, surprised at the suddenness of the question.

"Because," she said, "I play a little."

"Indeed!" said Dobley admiringly.

"I don't have many callers," she went on. "Although, of course, I might have been married many times over if I wanted to."

"I've no doubt of that," said Dobley. Then he suddenly remembered that time was passing. "About refer——" he began.

"I've two afternoons off every week, and, of course, I want my Sundays free," she said. "And about the wash? I don't do shirts."

"Certainly not," said Dobley.

"I might try the place," she said, "and if it suits me—why—I'm easy to get along with. What did you say the address was?"

Dobley gave her the number and street on a

slip of paper. "You might call and see my wife," he said.

"Your what?" said the bejetted person, rising to her feet.

"My wife," said Dobley meekly, "she usually attends to these things. I only dropped in to see——"

"Why didn't you say you had a wife?" demanded the lady indignantly. "Here I've been wasting my time talking to you. I'm looking for a place as housekeeper to a single gentleman!"

"I'm very sorry," said Dobley; "but I've been married for ten years. It happened somehow. One of those foolish impulsive matches——"

"I think you're crazy," said the lady, stalking from the room and slamming the door after her, while Dobley sat counting his fingers and talking to himself. If he could have escaped without being noticed at this moment, he would have taken any risk. But there was no window and only one door—the one which led through the office, from which he now heard sounds of tittering.

A tall, square-shouldered Swedish woman came in and stood towering over him and smiling an affectionate maternal smile that was almost appalling.

"Do you cook?" asked Dobley. He had determined to be severe this time.

"Yah!" said the woman.

"I want a cook, you know," said Dobley.—"and I'm married. I don't want to deceive you in any way."

"Yah!" she said.

"Do you talk English?"

"Ya—a—h!" smiling more broadly.

"Any other, I mean?" said Dobley.

"Yah—Yah!" she said, with friendly emphasis. "I— Anglish-h!"

"Yah— Ole—Oleson?" asked Dobley.

"Na—a—ah," she said, shaking her head. "Freda."

"Well, you won't do," said Dobley desperately. Her smile was irritating.

"Yah?" she asked.

"Nah!" said Dobley.

"Nah?" she persisted.

"That's what I said," said Dobley, looking at his watch.

"How old it is?" she asked tenderly.

"How old what is?"

"The ba-a-by?"

"What ba-a-by?"

"Nah?"

"Oh, see here, Freda, do you think we cook

babies at my house? Nah—nah—nah! I don't think you'll do at all, Freda. You smile too much, and you don't talk enough. We want a cook—not a sphinx."

"A cook? Yah?" she asked.

"Yah, a cook!" answered Dobley.

She rose sadly to her feet, her smiling face clouded over. She looked reproachfully at him. "A-hm-a-noorse," she said, her reproach changing to scorn. Then she drifted from the room.

Dobley mopped his brow as a stern-featured person in a shawl came in and sat down opposite him.

"Ar-re yiz looking for a kuk, sur?"

"I am," said Dobley; "that's the idea exactly."

"I'm a dacint, respectable woman," she said, "wid siven years' rifrince frum me last place—an' I wuz niver out uv a pla-a-ace in me life—an' I wuddn't be this blissid moment if it wuzn't fur a spalpeen uv a man that thot he cud ru-un the house himself. His poor wife wuz a dacint lady, an' she puts up wid him, but he's a cra-a-nk, an' doesn't desurve to have such a wife. Poor woman —many's the toime I've seen her cryin' over his stayin' out late nights an' tellin' her some lie whin he comes home—and that's a thrue word I'm tellin' ye."

"I want you to call and see my wife," said Dob-

ley, rising, for he had been rapidly planning an escape. "Just tell her that I said you'll do if she thought so. This is the address." He handed her a card.

"Diz ye hav references?" she asked.

"Oh, we can give you the best references," he said; "and anything you don't see, why, just ask for it and it will be yours. We'll pay you anything you like, and give you some private stock in the cellar, and we'll give up wearing shirts if that's any accommodation, and I'll get rid of my wife if you prefer it—anything—anything you may suggest. Good morning, madam, good morning!"

That night when Dobley reached home his wife met him at the door with a smiling face. "Oh, it was so lovely of you," she said, "to get Belinda back!"

"Belinda?" said Dobley, growing pale.

"Why, yes!" said Mrs. Dobley. "That was Belinda that you said would do if I thought so. And she wants only five dollars a month in advance—and really, you know, John, she's not so bad when you come to think of it!"

AN ALL-NIGHT SESSION

MR. DOBLEY had been out all night. There was no denying this fact. On occasions when he had returned home in time to say good morning to the milkman and put in an appearance at the breakfast-table it was always possible to insist that the hour of his homecoming had been four hours previous to its actual occurrence. This usually gave opportunity for a jocular discussion, in which Mrs. Dobley allowed herself to have the weaker side of the argument, as it placed matters on a pleasanter footing and gave Mr. Dobley a chance to escape gracefully. But this time he arrived at eleven the morning of the next day wearing his evening clothes and a stern, thoughtful expression calculated to repel any idle jests or adverse comment about his late appearance upon the scene. His haughtiness increased as he noticed that Mrs. Dobley maintained a continued and untroubled silence, ignoring his presence as she fed the canaries, with an aspect so light as to be almost cheerful.

After having bathed ostentatiously and shaved

grimly. Mr. Dobley assumed the habiliments of daytime and entered the dining-room, where Mrs. Dobley had already seated herself at the breakfast-table. She looked at Mr. Dobley as though for the first time aware of his presence, and proceeded to make a salad dressing with great precision, this being a task usually allotted to Mr. Dobley as a tribute to his alleged superiority in the art.

"I notice," said Mr. Dobley, with a tone of reproach in his voice, as he helped himself to a slice of dry toast, "that you have not considered it worth while to inquire as to the cause of my enforced absence from home last night."

"I had supposed," said Mrs. Dobley pleasantly, "that you were detained at the office."

"I left here for a dinner at the club," said Mr. Dobley. "Did you imagine that I left there for the office to spend the night at work?"

"I never question what a man may do," said Mrs. Dobley; "nor do I inquire too closely into his working hours. I have learned from you that business is carried on at the most unearthly hours. I can distinctly recall two or three times when important matters required your presence from dinner-time until sunrise of the next day. Why should I question a delay until after breakfast?"

"And the thought never occurred to you," said

Mr. Dobley in a surprised tone, "that some accident might have occurred; that I might have perished in a falling elevator or been run down by a trolley or a cable car? You dismissed my absence without a thought?"

"I knew," said Mrs. Dobley, "the company in which you had left here for your club dinner, and I felt quite sure that no accident was the cause of your delay. I knew that nothing but business could account for it. You have often told me that nothing but business would cause you to remain away from here one hour of the day or night."

"In this case, Mrs. Dobley," said Dobley firmly, "the cause is more important: a charity, a good deed, of which I would hesitate to speak were it not for the fact that I detect a sarcasm in your remarks which seems to reflect upon my habitual truthfulness."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Dobley, "you surprise me."

"I was delayed," said Mr. Dobley, "by the care of a human being who seemed, for the time being, to be entrusted to me—the safety of a friend who for the moment seemed to have lost all sense of location, of time, and of propriety. I am referring to that unfortunate young man Freshington, who last night evinced symptoms of a wild

and uncontrolled exuberance which to me indicated a lack of mental balance."

Mr. Dobley's voice almost broke as he took a broiled kidney and some watercresses on his plate and made a pretence of eating them. He was launched on his explanation and had wakened a gleam of interest in Mrs. Dobley's eye.

"It may be only temporary," said she. "I've heard of those things. I know of a man who had a cab driver take him home one night and then told the man to wait, that he was only going to take a Turkish bath."

Mr. Dobley's lip curled over his tea-cup. "I am sorry to say," he said seriously, "that there is no cab driver's mistake about poor Freshington's case. If I could only know where he is now, I should feel much happier."

"Where did you leave him?" asked Mrs. Dobley. "He's probably there yet, wherever that was."

"I left him," said Dobley solemnly, "but a few hours ago, after listening to his delirious babblings during the early hours of the morning. Then he sank into a slumber, from which nothing could waken him. And I left him there. I fear I should have remained."

"Where did you leave him?" asked Mrs. Dobley. "In a hotel, or hospital, or station-house?"

"I left him," said Dobley, "at none of those places. He was in a broken-down automobile on Fifth Avenue, opposite the Reservoir."

"What was he doing there?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Sleeping, I hope," said Dobley; "yet there were times when it seemed like a trance. I trust it was only slumber."

"Did the automobile break down?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"It must have broken down at some time," said Dobley thoughtfully, "for it was broken down when I left Freshington in it this morning. I am quite sure that it was broken down when we got in. Freshington in his dazed condition insisted on giving orders to an imaginary man on the box. It must have been thus, for if we had hired it we must certainly have experienced some jar when it collapsed. Then the man would have told us of the accident when it occurred, anyhow. As it was, I got in to humor Freshington. He was under the impression that we were on our way to his rooms. Frequently he shouted through the window for the man to hurry. The fact is, the thing wasn't going at all. This was one of my poor friend's peculiar hallucinations."

"When did they begin to develop?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"At the close of the club dinner," said Dobley. "Freshington confided to me the fact that he could make a better speech than any that had been given that evening. He said the art of after-dinner speaking was dying out because so many men were afraid of hurting their political chances by becoming known as funny men. He said he thought this idea rank superstition, and he proposed to talk about the matter. He rapped loud upon the table, and every one thought he had been asked to speak. Freshington made a splendid beginning, but he made a mistake by going back to his boyhood and quoting the entire poem of the 'Old Oaken Bucket.' The members wouldn't stand for that; so finally Freshington was quieted by the band striking up the tune of the song he was giving us. Then he became offended and left the room; and when I went to look for him an hour or so later, I found him in the kitchen talking about the Boer war to the chef. Then the first symptoms of his peculiar state of mind asserted themselves. He did not wish to go home. He said the crisp morning air was delightful, and that people, as a rule, spent too much time in sleep. He called my attention to a sparrow that was hopping along the curb, and said the morning was the time to see nature at its best."

"And you?" said Mrs. Dobley. "What did you say?"

"I reasoned with him," said Dobley; "but yet he carried me away somewhat with his arguments. You know nature is a weak point with me. Then he called a hansom and told the driver to take us to the lily pond in the park."

"The lily pond!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley. "At this time of year?"

"Yes, that's what I thought," said Dobley; "I knew nothing at all about it. But the fact is Freshington is a student of nature. He's been studying too hard of late, and this, I think, is the cause of his collapse. These magnificent intellects——"

"You'd better be careful yourself," suggested Mrs. Dobley.

"At all events," said Dobley, "he told me of this wonderful pond of lotus lilies in the park. Exactly at sunrise each morning they open and catch the very first rays, which tinge their naturally pink leaves with a delicate rose. The entire surface of the pond is covered with them, and the sight is well worth seeing. Freshington knew we were in time to catch it, and he gave the driver a dollar to hurry."

"Did you see them?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"We were just a little late," said Dobley.

"They had gone under again. It is only during the first moments of the sunrise that you can catch them. But Freshington explained to me that they might be near the surface, and we waded in some distance, feeling around with our canes until a park policeman appeared and told us that if we wanted to take the Kneipp cure we would have to walk on the grass. You see, we had taken off our shoes and stockings, and he didn't understand. When we asked him about the lilies, he told our driver to take us back to our ward. Freshington wanted to tell him about the flowers, but the policeman said he hadn't time; so we drove on. Then Freshington got an idea that a view of the city from the high curve of the elevated road just as the sun rose over the town would be a magnificent thing to see. I agreed with him, for it seemed as though it would be cruel to leave him standing on a corner at five in the morning with a pair of russet shoes and red stockings in his hand and a silk hat on the back of his head."

"Did you have your shoes off also?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"It seems to me as though I did," said Dobley, "and I recollect we picked out the middle of the street as the pleasantest place to walk on that account. Finally we came to an elevated station,

and Freshington wanted the guard to take our watches and money and keep them for us until we returned. He got some strange idea that we would be robbed. But the guard refused. Then we bought two morning papers and read the editorials out loud to each other. It was embarrassing, but I felt that it was best to humor Freshington. We rode then up to Harlem and back to the Battery several times. Freshington insisted on getting out at some stations and pointing out different picturesque bits of the view. He has quite an idea of art, and, strangely enough, this seemed to get uppermost with him. He said New Yorkers didn't appreciate New York, and he called my attention to the sky-line at least twenty times. At one of these stop-overs I lost Freshington. He had been whirled away on a downtown express, although we were taking an uptown trip at the time.

"I caught on to the train gate just as it plunged away, and was rudely knocked over on the platform by the guard. Freshington put his head out of the windows and shouted some unintelligible directions as to where I would find him. I felt that it was my duty not to lose him. I boarded the next train, keeping a sharp lookout at each station and inquiring of the ticket-takers as to any sign of him. No one had seen him,

and finally I reached the Battery. Here was the most melancholy proof of Freshington's wandering intellect. The Battery station has its walls fairly plastered with pictorial advertisements. A crowd had collected about Freshington, who was walking about pointing out different pictures with his cane and talking in the manner of a lecturer. He was firmly convinced that he was in an art gallery. Finally, with some difficulty, I got him downstairs, and we boarded a cable car, Freshington insisting on purchasing large quantities of fruit from a stand. He said that fruit was the food of the future, and that the consumption of animal food would within the next century be looked upon as a practice worthy of cannibals. By this time it was quite light, and we thought breakfast would be in order. Freshington would have nothing but strawberries and champagne. He said that the spiritual nature could be highly developed if people would choose only delicate things of this sort. He said a great deal more that I can't recall, all of a very æsthetic nature. Then he thought it would be a delightful idea for us to buy some roses to take home. With this object in view we walked toward Fifth Avenue and then turned north. I began to realize the necessity of getting Freshington home and getting myself home as well. I was thoroughly

prepared for the sarcastic innuendoes and hysterical questionings of a woman whose suspicions are developed to an extent detrimental to the trustfulness and belief that one associates with femininity.

"We saw the automobile, entered it, and remarked the wonderful ease with which it moved. Freshington said several times that one would think we weren't going at all. About this time he became delirious and accused me of robbing him of his watch. Then he apologized, and gave it to me as a gift, together with his money and his scarfpin. After this he fell asleep, or, rather, went into a trance. I looked out and discovered that the automobile was in exactly the same place that it had been when we entered it. I couldn't be mistaken on the Reservoir. I left Freshington sleeping. I fear for the boy's safety. I should have remained by his side, but the thought of you, watching for my return, as I fondly believed, proved too much for me. I came home, to be met with reproaches. Now, you have the story."

Mr. Dobley leaned back in his chair eying Mrs. Dobley with displeasure and sternness. Mrs. Dobley reached to the silver bread-basket and took therefrom a small, round bread biscuit, with sugar on the top. She put it carefully on a

plate and passed it across the table to her husband.

"Here, Mr. Dobley," she said, "is a bun. You will notice that it has sugar on it. There are also raisins and caraway seeds in it. I think you deserve it."

Then she left the room with an eloquent glance backward over her shoulder, which, as Dobley said, was as good as a wink.

THE DÉBUT OF MIKE

DOBLEY'S début in amateur theatricals was one of those magnificent failures that somehow command respect. He went into the dramatic field with a delightful earnestness of purpose that almost seemed to belong to another era, so rare is it in these club-soda days. What he might have accomplished in this line of art will always remain a mystery, owing to a series of events that almost led to a riot among the audience that had assembled in the east room of the Hyphen Hotel to witness "Hamlet" by amateurs with interpolated music. In the middle of an act Dobley walked to the footlights and rang down the curtain, afterward excusing himself for his impulsive action by explaining that the rumbling of the steam pipes annoyed him and that his extremely high-strung temperament suffered at the undercurrent of merriment which seemed to prevail among the auditors. The audience dispersed, apparently quite as well satisfied and amused as though they had seen the play to the finish.

Every one who was there that evening admitted

that Dobley's make-up in imitation of Irving's Hamlet was superb. Some of the critics said that if he could have posed in a series of living pictures through the part with the musical accompaniment, but without moving or speaking, his histrionic success would have been assured, and that all the managers would have been after him for a professional début. As it was, several matters militated strongly against Dobley's success as the melancholy Dane, the principal one being his endeavor to convey the effect of Hamlet's insanity, a point which, he said, the professional actors had always neglected. Then, too, Dobley had a severe attack of stage fright from the time the curtain rose until he imperiously ordered it down. And then there was the dog.

The dog is really a whole story in himself. Dobley brought him home without any warning or expression of his intentions in the matter. He knew that, while Mrs. Dobley liked dogs, he frequently said that a country house was the only suitable place in which they could be kept with justice to the dog and comfort to the owners. When Van Ripper bought a Great Dane and exhibited it proudly to Dobley, the latter was immediately seized with the ambition to possess a dog, and to introduce him to Mrs. Dobley after he had become, by purchase, one of the family.

While he desired a bigger dog than Van Ripper's, he found that was impossible, as nothing but a Saint Bernard would approach Van Ripper's in size. A Saint Bernard was too quiet a dog for Dobley's tastes. He wanted something fierce and bloodthirsty-looking, like Van Ripper's, or else something quietly sporty, with a pedigree that nothing could touch. This was how he came to secure Mike, a bulldog, a direct successor to Sancho Panza, with several blue ribbons and an ugliness of visage and a bandiness of leg decidedly aristocratic.

He walked into the dining-room one evening with Mike loafing in the rear. Mike had taken a most violent and insane fancy to Dobley from the moment he had become the property of that gentleman, and while Dobley always pretended extreme amusement at the degree of affection he had awakened in Mike's gentle breast, it secretly increased his respect for the dog's intelligence and keen human insight. Mrs. Dobley greeted the dog with an impressive silence that chilled Dobley. He had expected an outbreak of surprise, disapproval, and final amusement, but Mrs. Dobley acted like a woman ossified. She made no gesture welcoming Mike to the Dobley home as a ray of sunshine that was to brighten the Dobley ménage. She did not even say, "Doggie,

doggie, come and kiss oor muzzer," as Dobley had fondly fancied she would. She did not even remark that it was too sweet for anything. She only looked fixedly at Mike and then looked at her husband as though she would say: "I am a refined and cultured woman. I may poison this dog later on, but I shall not so far forget myself as to express the feelings which at present agitate me." Had she known more of the extremes of love and hate peculiar to the bulldog nature she would have been more diplomatic than to give Mike the cut direct at their first meeting. Mike never forgot this icy greeting, and expressed his feelings by ignoring her absolutely while he lavished affection on Dobley. More than that, he objected fiercely to any display of affection from Dobley to his wife, or vice versa, and the result was that an imperceptible coolness arose between the Dobleys that would have resulted in estrangement if the dog had remained longer under the Dobley roof.

In reality Mike was there only when his master was. He followed him to the office and went out to luncheon with him. If the Dobleys tried to get an evening off and had him tied up somewhere while they went to the theatre, it was quite a common occurrence for an usher to come excitedly down the aisle to whisper to Dobley that

his dog was outside and seemed anxious to see him. Every theatre and hotel in town got to know Dobley's dog, and the Dobleys began to be disliked in the various places that dogs are supposed to be excluded, such as at church and at Dobley's clubs. The Dobleys were put out of one hotel where they went to stop while the plumbing was being repaired. The manager was a personal friend of Dobley's, but he said the other guests objected to Mike's appearance in the elevators and corridors. Then the Dobleys left and took a furnished apartment in the neighborhood, but Dobley, bearing no ill will to the manager, used to stroll into the café evenings after dinner. Mike after him, of course. One night the manager came to Dobley and said: "Look here, Dobley, what do you think I asked you for that hundred-dollar corner suite for?"

"Why on account of the dog, of course," said Dobley.

"Well, can't you understand that if we have to have the dog anyhow we might just as well have you and the money for those rooms?"

Dobley saw the force of this, and began to spend his evenings walking through the streets with Mike. He used to say at this time that the society of a good dog was company enough for any man. The atmosphere at the Dobley home

was getting positively frigid. The dog's habits were peculiar. He could not seem to understand why Dobley went to bed, and, above all, to sleep at nights. Mike acted as though he thought this a decided waste of time, and sat stolidly on the rug at the foot of Dobley's bed until daybreak, apparently pondering over the extreme stupidity and inaction of night-time. In the morning he carefully overlooked Dobley's bath and his shave, and then strolled down to breakfast with him, sneering at Mrs. Dobley. Then Dobley began to rehearse "Hamlet," and he read the play aloud to Mrs. Dobley, and discussed the question of Hamlet's sanity or insanity. It seemed a most important thing to Dobley, and it rather annoyed him to find that Mrs. Dobley did not regard this point as being serious.

"At those amateur affairs," she said, "they rarely attempt any of those fine effects. If the actors talk distinctly and go on and off the stage at the right time, it is all that can be expected."

"Well, I have a distinct idea that Shakespeare meant Hamlet to be mad, and I am going to play the part in that way; intelligently, as I think the author meant it."

Strictly on the quiet Dobley began to take lessons in dramatic art from an ex-actor, one of the

old school, who approved of Dobley's conception of a mad Hamlet.

"My boy," he said, "you have struck the right note! No professional is daring enough to take this view of the matter in his renditions of the rôle. The melancholy of Hamlet is really the melancholy of madness, and at certain points this madness should be accented strongly, daringly, so as to drive it home to the minds of the audience."

Of course Mike went to these lessons with Dobley, and also to the rehearsals. He got to know the part just as well as Dobley did; could take the positions on the stage, and seemed to approve strongly of Dobley's acting, with the exception of the insane intervals, which the old-school actor said he had studied at a real insane asylum. It was the exact phase of melancholy lunacy, he said. Nothing violent, but a sort of gentle gibbering—a biting of the finger-nails and a vacant gazing off into space. Dobley spent all his time studying up this effect, for he felt sure that it would cause no end of discussion among literary people. On the night of the performance Dobley asked as a favor that Mike might be allowed behind the scenes. But the stage manager refused to allow Sancho Panza's descendant to have any part in the show, averring that the ladies of

the cast might be rendered nervous by the presence of the animal. So Dobley himself that afternoon personally lured Mike to the stable of a friend, where the dog was tied up with many ropes and left with a plentiful supply of bones and water to comfort him during his enforced absence from his master's side. The excitement which prevails behind the scenes on a first night of grand opera is said to be intense, but it is as nothing to the keyed-up state of a company of amateurs waiting the rise of the curtain. Make-up and costumes are adjusted and parts rehearsed and gone over at the last minute, while gasmen and scene-shifters, affected by the general confusion that prevails, make all sorts of mistakes, and create effects that make amateur performances the weird, wild, wonderful things they always are. It was during Hamlet's scene with the Queen, when the Ghost appears to him but not to her, that the unexpected climax occurred which brought an end to an extremely interesting and amusing performance. The audience had sat politely through stage waits that seemed interminable, daylight effects turned on with the moon in plain sight, soldiers who tripped over their feet, and other catastrophes which have grown to be a part of amateur performances, and are, therefore, expected. Dobley's simulated madness had grad-

ually brought the audience to imagine that he was trying to burlesque the part, and while the rest of the cast were undergoing scathing criticism he was making a reputation as a funny man. There was a pleasant tumult of carefully kept-in laughter going on while Dobley dragged out his various speeches with all the fine fury and fire of the old school. He had just come to the lines:

"Do you see nothing there?"

"Nothing at all, yet all there is I see," said the Queen.

"Nor did you nothing hear?" asked Dobley.

"No, nothing—but ourselves——"

"Why, look you there! Look, how it steals away!" said Dobley in a fervor as he considered this one of his best scenes.

Just then there was a scuffle at the door, and down the middle aisle came Mike, a yard or two of rope dangling from his collar, but his step calm and dignified as ever. No one dared to touch him. There was that in his eye and in the gleaming teeth that defied any interference. He climbed easily upon the stage by way of the orchestra, and was about to go on with the part of Hamlet as he had rehearsed it, when suddenly he became aware of Dobley's make-up. Dobley was endeavoring to chase Mike back of the stage, from which issued a chorus of whistles and en-

couraging chirps which Mike heeded not at all.

Advancing to Dobley, whom he evidently did not recognize in his Irvingesque make-up, he proceeded to attack him as an intruder and interloper on his master's prerogatives, making Mr. Dobley's legs the chief point of attack. The Queen Mother retreated from the stage, and the undercurrent of laughter in the audience was suddenly set loose, swelling into an uproarious burst of approving merriment as Mike, evidently annoyed at Dobley's non-appearance, began to chase Hamlet around the stage on the battlements. It was then that Dobley rang down the curtain. It did not rise again that night, for there was no audience when the excitement behind the scenes was quieted. Dobley wanted to go right on with the part, but the stage manager said that a Hamlet with a bull pup following at his heels might be new; but it was too new for a tragedy.

Mrs. Dobley refused to speak to her husband for a week after this event, and finally Dobley sold Mike; but it was no use. The dog returned calmly after each removal and took up his place as though nothing had happened. It was then that Mrs. Dobley went home on a visit to her mother until Dobley wrote her that a friend going abroad had taken Mike to London for his health.

OPERA AT BREAKFAST

"ONCE more the opera!" sighed Mrs. Dobley over the breakfast-table in an ecstasy of musical delight as she looked over the morning paper.

"How I love Vogner!" said Dobley. "Dear, dear old Vogner." He rolled up his eyes in imitation of the Wagnerite talking about his idol.

"You must secure seats for us at once, Mr. Dobley; I don't wish to miss a night."

"Us?" asked Mr. Dobley.

"Why, yes; the Van Rippers are going."

"I suppose that settles it. Now, look here, Honora, I'll get you the seats, but you make up some kind of a pool with the Van Rippers and go with them. I tell you, grand opera jars me."

"I suppose you mean that soul tension that the music produces; that magnetic influence that comes over the footlights and permeates the audience?"

"No, I don't allude to that exactly, Mrs. Dobley. I am thinking of last season, when we went to the opera and a certain magnetic influence sent Van Ripper and myself out to a neighboring café, where we sought oblivion so successfully that it

usually took a week to get over a grand-opera night. And there was always a lot of men doing the same thing."

"I am sure you have a musical soul, John; I hate to hear you talk like this; I can't understand you sometimes."

"No; you don't always catch the idea. But this one is like this: Grand opera always seems to me like the most unmitigated fool nonsense. It strikes me as being funny, but not funny enough. Do you see?"

"Funny? Grand opera?"

"Yes, but not sufficiently so. It's so absolutely impossible and unreal. So is all opera, of course; but at a comic opera they let you laugh once in a while. But at the Metropolitan you just have to sit up and look pleasant, and all the time wish you were at any other place on the map but there. I tell you, I won't stand for it any more. I'm through!"

"You certainly must be a musical heathen to talk in that way," said Mrs. Dobley, "and I thought you had so much music and poetry in you! I hope you won't let other folks hear you talking that way. They would think your mind was affected. Every one adores grand opera. What do you mean?"

"Well, it's like this: In grand opera they start

in to tell a story, don't they? There's supposed to be a plot somewhere, a scheme, you understand, a hero, a heroine, and all the rest."

"Why, certainly. Some of the most beautiful legends in the world are told in that way."

"Well, now, what I object to is the length of time they take to unfold that plot—to tell the story and get it to a finish. They sing at each other for a quarter of an hour about some matter that could be settled in two sentences. They sing things over and over again, and then have the supes sing choruses from the wings, as though time were eternity. While this is going on, I am always waiting for them to play ball. Oh, they are so slow in grand opera that business must have been at a standstill in those days! Nothing doing but singing! Can't you see how foolish it all is?"

"I could never look at in that light," said Mrs. Dobley decidedly. "I enjoy the music extremely. I enjoy every note, and those deep orchestral effects, and the choruses, and everything! I think it's lovely."

"And the recitative? Now, Mrs. Dobley, can you truthfully say that you enjoy all those long-drawn-out parts where they line up on either side of the stage and begin to fling musical repartee at each other? That is the part that drives Van

Ripper and myself to drink. We can stand a good chorus or a song by an artist whose salary commands our respect. It only bores Van Ripper, but it exasperates me. I tell you, grand opera is largely an American fad. And the only reason men go is because they have to."

"You should read more, Mr. Dobley, and cultivate your mind on musical matters, so that you would not take this peculiar point of view. It's all a matter of culture and education, and when you talk like that, you are only making an unconscious confession of—of——"

"Ignorance?" said Mr. Dobley.

"Well, not quite that. Say an absence of appreciation for the highest form of musical art."

"On the contrary, Mrs. Dobley, I enjoy good music, and I can stand even opera when it's comic, and the people on the stage seem to realize the plumb absurdity of it all. But take the other—oh, it's weird! A chap sees a girl in grand opera and conceives a violent love for her. What does he do? Anything and everything that he wouldn't do in real life. He breaks out in song and tells the whole town about it. Every one, in fact, is let into the secret but the girl herself, who suffers for three acts and imagines he loves some one else During three verses he stands like an insipid idiot, first on one foot and then

on the other, yelling his love out to the neighborhood. It always happens outdoors in opera. And the girl. Oh, those impossibly heroic, impossibly foolish grand-opera girls! Oh, la-la-la-la!"

"Really, Mr. Dobley, I cannot imagine what you mean. Are you alluding to the great heroines of opera when you say 'girls'?"

"That's what I mean, Mrs. Dobley. In real life, if a girl saw a man starting in to act that way there are several things she might do. But never by any chance does she do in grand opera what she would do when on earth. She might call a policeman or ring for an ambulance, or go over and give him a tract or her visiting card; but not in a thousand years would she stand there looking at him sing and joining in little spurts of duet with a man she hadn't been introduced to. That's the way I see it, and I think it's foolish."

"All people have not your keen sense of humor, Mr. Dobley," said Mrs. Dobley. "Most of us appreciate æsthetic beauty of the combined music and great voices. We don't quite look for such realism as you seem to demand, and we don't object to the—the——"

"Foolishness. No, that's it. People seem to like it. Now, take two men in grand opera who are going to fight a duel, say. They snarl and

bow-wow at each other for fifteen minutes before they begin to mix up. Then between times they sing little ditties about what they are going to do to the other fellow, giving away all their points, as it were, and trying to look pretty all the time. That's so like a fight, isn't it? I tell you, Mrs. Dobley, it is absurd. This is an age of realism in art."

"What would you have them do?"

"Well, not sing and fight at the same time first. But understand me, Mrs. Dobley, I have no plan to reform grand opera, except to shorten it, and cut out the recitative part. This would lessen the misery of the people who are waiting for something to happen in an ordinarily probable way. Now, take the duel, for instance. One of the men gets a jolt——"

"A what?"

"Well, a jab with a sword, that downs him. What does he do? Why, sing of course. What does the other fellow do? Sing tra-la-la. On come the villagers skipping like goats. Do they help the man or call the police? No, because it's grand opera. They sing a few songs. They sing about battle, murder, and sudden death, just as quick as they hear of it. The soldiers sing as they march off to war; the clergymen sing as they marry people and bury them. And once won't

do—they sing it over and over again. And people come on and ask what's the matter, and they sing it to them a few more times; and first thing you know they are all singing, friends and enemies all together—the whole bunch like a musical lunatic asylum. Now, just to show you how idiotically impossible and comical grand opera is, Mrs. Dobley, let us bring it down to to-day. You are sitting here at the breakfast-table, suppose, and I come in to join. Do I walk in decently, soberly, pleasantly, and sanely? Ah, no; not a bit like it. But like this."

Mr. Dobley vanished into the hall for a moment and then reappeared with his overcoat draped over one shoulder like a cape and a soft felt hat pulled down over his eyes. He looked exactly like a brigand. He clutched the portiere as he entered, looking stealthily from side to side, and advanced to the table in long strides. Mrs. Dobley sat looking at him with amazement and some anxiety.

"Goo—oo—ood morning, Mrs. Dobley!" sang Mr. Dobley in an impressive basso. "Now," he continued, "that would never end the matter, you know. You'd sing good morning seventeen or eighteen times, and then we'd do a song and dance about it before it was quite settled; then I'd start singing again. Oh, you couldn't stop me! What

—ha—a—ve we to eat this mo—r—r—ning?" he chanted. "I wouldn't give you any chance to answer unless you broke in when I stopped to get breath. Finally, when I stopped with a flourish, neither of us eating, remember, only waiting to get through the singing, you'd begin a dainty little tremolo like this: 'Or—an—ges—oatmeal—and cre—e—eam. And ha—a—a—am and eggs.' You'd go over this, you know, eight or nine times, and then I'd sing: 'What! ha—a—m and eggs again? I thought I told you I was tired of ham and eggs.' Then you'd sing: 'It is the coo—oo—oo—k's fault.' You know you always blame everything on the cook. Then I should sing: 'We'll have to fire the cook!'"

"Yes," said Mrs. Dobley, "you always say that, too, but you never take any active part in such a proceeding."

"We are talking of grand opera now, Mrs. Dobley, and I really think you are beginning to grasp what I mean when I speak of its absurdity. You see how funny it seems when you bring it down to real life. We'd sing about cook all through breakfast. Then I'd sing the news out of the morning paper, and you'd probably sing about the bargain sales, and we'd go on singing as though we had time to burn. Then I'd start for the office. But I wouldn't go all at once. Oh, no!

I'd sing about it for an hour and a half, and tell you the story of my life in several different keys, and you'd flash high notes on me, and we'd do a walk-around, and any one who happened to see us would put us down as two first-class idiots."

"I think they would be perfectly justified," said Mrs. Dobley. "But regarding grand opera, I think the trouble is that you lack appreciation of the subject. You simply don't know——"

"No, I don't," said Dobley; "and I'll be hanged if I am going to pretend that I do. And now, Mrs. Dobley, as the hour is waxing apace, I'll sing you a little farewell song." Dobley struck another attitude and began to intone a song of good-by. "How perfectly silly you are!" remarked his wife. "Really, Mr. Dobley, there are times when you seem to be afflicted with a sort of hysteria that suggests childishness."

But Mr. Dobley only danced gaily from the room in the fashion of a Spanish dancer, stamping his feet, shaking his head, and banging imaginary castanets while he still sang his good-bys.

PUT AWAY IN LAVENDER

"ALL the sweet old customs are dying out," sighed Mrs. Dobley. "Valentine's Day is getting to be an old-fashioned joke, like everything else that is a bit sentimental. And yet I can recollect how every year when we were engaged you used to send me the most charming and artistic remembrances with some pretty thought in verse."

"Valentines," said Mr. Dobley, "are relics of an era when a man got on his knees to propose, and when girls thought it the proper caper to act like startled fawns on all occasions. They were a maudlin, indirect way of expressing affection that a man was afraid to speak of——"

"That's it," said Mrs. Dobley, "you sneer now at everything you once swore by. In some cases the passing of youth leaves a certain trace of romance that clings to the personality like the fragrance to a vase that has once held flowers; in others, the sentiments are suffocated by the crush of modern life."

"The only kind of valentine I admire," said Mr. Dobley, "is the penny valentine. Did you ever

know that Freshington broke off his engagement to a girl he thought a great deal of on account of a penny valentine? He hates the day to come around."

"How was that?" asked Mrs. Dobley with interest.

"Freshington was devoted to this girl—really in love with her, you know; but she didn't seem to see it at all, and she was absolutely devoid of sentiment. Freshington hasn't much himself, but this girl hadn't even a symptom of it. When Valentine's Day came around, she sent him a penny valentine representing a lovelorn youth. I forget the verse, but when Freshington tells the story he recites it with great bitterness.

"Freshington took the valentine to her, accused her of sending it, and she admitted it; thought it was a good joke. Freshington parted with her forever. He said he didn't mind his feelings being hurt so much as discovering that she was capable of such an unwomanly, flippant exhibition of bad taste. Then Freshie went home and stayed mad for two days. Then he began to think that, after all, it was only a girlish folly that even now she was sorry for. Probably she was crying about it even then. Sometimes those funny girls have good hearts, he thought. So he decided to go back and forgive her.

"She was an art student, a Chicago girl, who had taken a studio, and just at twilight one afternoon Freshie put on a new tie and got a shine and a shave and went over. He knew about that time she'd be having tea and, perhaps, thinking of the happy afternoons when he used to be there. The studio door was open, and she was writing at her desk with her back to the door.

"'Ah,'" thought Freshington, 'the dear little girl is probably writing me a note, asking me to forget her foolish act!' He stole up softly behind her, just as they do in plays—and what do you think he found her doing?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mrs. Dobley.

"She was sending another penny valentine to her mother in Chicago. That settled it! Freshington never got over that. He said it killed every spark of affection he had ever felt for her."

"I always suspected that Freshington had a great deal of hidden sentiment about him. It always seemed odd that he has never married," said Mrs. Dobley.

"Well, that's the reason," said Dobley; "Freshington gets to talking about that girl yet. He says she had many lovable and redeeming traits, but he couldn't imagine her as the sunlight of a home or anything of that sort. He was all broken up about it."

"You see, valentines mean a lot," said Mrs. Dobley. "It was the valentines you sent me that first made me think seriously about you."

"Oh, come now!" said Mr. Dobley. "Don't tell me I ever had the valentine habit?"

"I should say you had," said his wife; "in its most virulent form."

"Mrs. Dobley, you are thinking of some one else. I feel certain that I never expressed my emotions by means of colored pictures trimmed with lace and stuffed with cotton."

"I can show you the proofs," said Mrs. Dobley triumphantly; "for I still have them."

She turned the key in a drawer of the library desk, and as she opened it a faint odor of lavender came up through the room. Dobley gazed in astonishment at several mysterious-looking packets wrapped in white linen handkerchiefs, tied with blue baby ribbon.

"Is this a private mausoleum of yours?" he asked. "They look like corpses——"

"Of vanished sentiment!" said Mrs. Dobley, looking at him from under her lashes, as she used to years ago. "They are your old valentines to me."

"Well, I'll be—blessed!" exclaimed Dobley. "Do you mean to say you have kept those fool things all these years?"

Mrs. Dobley nodded without speaking. She was kneeling beside the open drawer, looking at the queer little white bundles rapturously.

"This," she said, almost in a whisper, as she picked one reverently out of the lot, "is the first. I was at school, and I never suspected that it was you. You see, there was another boy——"

"Several others," said Dobley. "Now, I can recollect calling to see you, and you showed me that valentine, and said you thought it was from the other fellow, until finally——"

"Finally—you told me the truth about it. I knew I could find out in time, for no man ever sends anything anonymously to a girl without coming round in a few days and looking unconscious."

She unfolded it as carefully as though it were a baby. It was a wonderful ornate affair, as Dobley said, made with a paper background, from which various lacework frames could be raised on little paper springs, until they stood out from the card, creating the effect of a Kiralfy transformation scene. Two pink armless hands were clasped in the distance, showing just a hint of coat-sleeve and a ruffle of lace, to make the question of sex distinct. A crushed strawberry heart seemed thrown carelessly at the side, from which

drops of carmine oozed at the point of a golden arrow.

"Listen to this," began Mrs. Dobley, reading with difficulty the faded tracery of letters:

> "'There are some spirits fitly strung
> To echo back the tones of mine——'"

"Oh, say," said Mr. Dobley, "don't rake up old follies of that sort! Boys will be boys!"

"That wouldn't matter so much," said Mrs. Dobley, "if girls didn't insist on being girls, and on staying girls till the end of the chapter!"

"All but that girl of Freshington's," said Dobley, trying to change the subject, as Mrs. Dobley seemed on the verge of an emotional breakdown.

"Now, I like that valentine," he went on, "all but the heart. It suggests a slaughter-house to me now. And the girl here on the left scaffold with a rose. What has she to do with the plot?"

"Why, can't you see," said Mrs. Dobley, dimpling. "That's supposed to be me—I always understood it that way; and her eyes and mouth certainly are like mine!"

"But she's a blonde," said Dobley. "Why should I pick out a blonde valentine to send to a brunette girl? I wonder if I could have mixed 'em up?"

Mrs. Dobley refolded it softly. "The next," she said, "was more serious. You had gone away

to college, and I think that was about the time you began to get jealous."

"I jealous?" said Dobley. "Ha—ha—ha—ha! That's good!"

"Well, you were frightfully so," said Mrs. Dobley, "and this proves it!"

"'Trust no idle promise
Words are but grains of sand—
To keep your heart unbroken——'

"I can't make out the rest; can you?"

"Listen to the band!" said Mr. Dobley, affecting to read from the valentine. "It's a magnificently upholstered affair, isn't it? Reminds me of a temperance badge."

It was a hand-painted satin plaque, framed in a deep border of pale blue plush. In the corners were bow knots of silver. A rosy cupid sat on a gray cloud, his arrow poised.

"It's really pretty yet!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley, holding it at arm's length.

"It's what I should call chaste," said Dobley. "What is the screed in gold ink below the archery champion?"

"'Though rocks and hills divide us,' read Mrs. Dobley, 'and you I cannot see, I'll think of you in kindness, if you will think of me!'"

"That's rather chilly, isn't it?" said Dobley.

"That was after I refused you for the first

time," said Mrs. Dobley. "I really cared for you, but I thought you were too serious."

"I should have thought that my valentines would have dispelled that illusion," said Mr. Dobley, turning the plush-framed card over in his hand with a smile.

"That's it," said Mrs. Dobley, "you can't see now how sweet it all was then. You've actually forgotten. A woman never does!"

"There are some things a man likes to forget," said Dobley, recognizing a warning gulp in Mrs. Dobley's voice, which threatened tears.

"The third one," she said, without addressing Dobley specially, "came in a box. They got more elaborate every year. This was one of those mystical symbolic things. I used to puzzle out what you meant by it. It was a Paris valentine, and I would have showed it to every one I knew, but that this group of girls on the beach here hadn't anything on but spray, and it seemed just a trifle startling!"

"I should say so!" said Dobley. "I must have had more nerve then than I have now to send that to a girl. It reminds me of the Puffman House. How did my soul express itself on this occasion?"

Mrs. Dobley pried open a satin rose with the tip of her little finger. "Wasn't it a lovely idea?

Written in the heart of the rose. 'Remember me—but why? You can't forget me if you try!' Isn't that cute?"

"Honor bright," said Dobley, "I never knew that verse was there! I just bought the thing on the salesman's recommendation. I can recollect it now. I asked him for the latest thing, and he pushed that on me, and I bought it."

"Number four," said Mrs. Dobley, "you wrote yourself. Yes, here it is in your own handwriting."

"That's one of the things I should have typewritten," said Dobley, recognizing it with a groan.

"Why, I think it's lovely," said Mrs. Dobley, "because, you see, I recollect the reason."

"There could be no reason," said Dobley, "no reason, but an unsound mind. I'll buy that from you now at your own price. There's a chance for you to make money, Mrs. Dobley. How much will you take for it?"

"I wouldn't sell it for anything in the world!" said Mrs. Dobley. "That was just before you proposed the second time. I knew you were going to, because you began to act odd—and you tried to be awfully serious, and pretend that you didn't really care. Well, it rather amused me, and——"

"Oh, it amused you, did it?" asked Dobley. "It struck you as humorous——"

"That you should be so serious. So I rather used to make fun of you——" Mrs. Dobley giggled at the recollection.

"To guy me, as it were?" said Dobley.

"Oh, not quite that!" said Mrs. Dobley. "But a girl has to act like that till she's quite sure. It's like having her own monogram put on the things in her trousseau. You never know what might happen. So you wrote this; you composed it yourself you told me."

"As bad as that!" said Dobley.

"I think it's beautiful," said Mrs. Dobley. "Now listen:

> "'Some people can always be funny,
> And keep you laughing all the while;
> Now I am entirely contented
> If I only can see you smile!'"

"Not so bad, that!" said Dobley, lighting a cigar to conceal his confusion.

"I think it's a dear!" said Mrs. Dobley. "It was the first poem you ever wrote me. The others——"

"How much will you take for the bunch?" asked Mr. Dobley.

"The others," went on Mrs. Dobley, "I have upstairs, with some flowers from my wedding

bouquet, and some other little things that I wouldn't part with for all the money in the world. And to think it's all done with and we're old and prosaic and commonplace, and don't care for each other except in a stupid sort of married-folk way, and Valentine's Day don't make a bit of difference to us: no romance——"

"Do they make 'em nowadays?" said Dobley.

"What?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Valentines."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Dobley, "only they are more up to date. There are two ways of sending valentines. You go to the confectioners and they have great satin boxes, beautifully ornamented with cupids and roses and bow knots; done by really good artists, you know. Then you have them filled with the very nicest candies you can get, and you just send it without any poetry."

"Sort of verseless valentine, eh?" said Dobley.

"Or you can go to the florists and get a big—a very big bunch of beautiful violets—not the usual kind, but the great California violets—with loose perfumy blossoms and great long green stems, and you have them tied up with ribbon—yards and yards—and you send them in a box, with a pin to fasten them on."

"Well, suppose," said Dobley, "that we could

blot out the hideous past! Suppose we imagine that we are not married—that it's all a disagreeable dream—and suppose I were sending you valentines as industriously as I did in the times when you collected these—these prize packages——"

"Yes?" said Mrs. Dobley. "Let's suppose it's not really so; that we are still romantic——"

"In which case," said Dobley, "which particular brand of the modern valentine would you prefer?"

"I think," said Mrs. Dobley, smiling, as she put her head softly on Dobley's shoulder, "I think I should like both."

SNAKES AND SOCIETY

"ANOTHER invitation from Mr. Freshington," said Mr. Dobley, reading from a letter which had come at breakfast-time. "'A most unique evening,' he says. 'You must not miss it.'"

"At whose house is he giving it this time?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"It is to be at the studio of Van Rattler, the artist," said Mr. Dobley.

"Who is Van Rattler?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Van Rattler is the celebrated painter of snakes," explained Dobley. "He has only two fads, snakes and society. He knows more on both subjects than any other man in New York, and he has ideas on the subject of bringing society and art more in touch with each other. They say that his is the only really artistic studio in New York. The dust is an inch thick everywhere. He loves dust, Van Rattler does; says it gives an exquisite haze to old furniture."

"I should say it did," said Mrs. Dobley. "Doesn't he ever have the place swept?"

"Just you suggest it to him," said Mr. Dobley. "He would think such an idea horrible. He likes

dust and gloom and snakes, and a little society. Give him these and he is happy."

"What queer people Mr. Freshington does know," said Mrs. Dobley. "When he invites us anywhere, one never knows what to expect."

"That's the beauty of it," said Dobley enthusiastically. "There is not much fun in cut-and-dried entertainment. Freshington's evenings always have the charm of novelty."

"I wonder what one should wear to such a thing?" mused Mrs. Dobley. "It isn't a tea nor a musicale——"

"There are to be two dances, I believe," said Mr. Dobley, referring to the letter. "Freshington says: 'When you have once seen Miss Wobbleton, the society girl, do her wonderful snake dance, you will never forget it.'"

"A snake dance!" said Mrs. Dobley. "How very odd!"

"Then there is to be a ballet dance in costume by Mr. Willie Wump; that is to be something great," went on Dobley.

"Wump? Wump?" repeated Mrs. Dobley. "Where have I heard that name before?"

"He's one of the Wumps of Washington. His mother was a Miss MacSnorter of Virginia, a great beauty. Willie is a sort of society pet. He's a very clever boy, very clever! He's always

doing funny things. Rubbed lettuce in his hair at dinner once, and when they asked him why he did it, said he thought it was spinach."

"How very peculiar," said Mrs. Dobley.

"But original, you must admit," said Mr. Dobley.

"Oh, very original, certainly!" replied Mrs. Dobley, somewhat doubtfully. "But I've just been thinking, won't it seem odd for me to go, never having met Mr. Van Rattler?"

"It's Freshington's party," said Mr. Dobley. "There are plenty of parties at Van Rattler's studio that he isn't able to go to himself. He has so many engagements. He sent out cards for one this winter, and then forgot and went to the opera. But everything went on just the same. You see, people understand Van Rattler, and nothing he does surprises them."

"I see," said Mrs. Dobley. "I think I'll wear my black spangled gown."

The Van Rattler studio was at the very top of an old building in the Washington-Square part of the town. There was no elevator, as Dobley explained to his wife, and they would be forced to climb eight flight of stairs. But when they reached the place, a greater obstacle presented itself. They could see the lights in the Van Rattler studio, and even heard occasional strains of

mandolin music; but the outer door was closed, and there was no bell. The Dobleys were in a dilemma. They looked up yearningly at the windows, and Dobley whistled; but it was all in vain.

"I think it is rather funny," said Mrs. Dobley, "to invite people to a party and then have the door fixed so that nobody can get in."

Just then a hansom cab drove up to the door and a man in evening dress got out.

"It's Van Rattler himself," said Dobley. "Hello, Van Rattler, you're just in time! We've come to the party and we can't get in."

"Dear me," said Van Rattler. "Is there a party here? I hadn't heard of it?" He bowed politely as Dobley presented his wife.

"In your studio," explained Dobley. "Freshington, you know?"

"Oh, that young man I met last Tuesday! I remember now perfectly. I understand now why the door is locked. You see, my friend Mrs. Hyphen Shudder had arranged to give a recital here to-night, and Mr. Freshington did not know it. When he discovered about the recital, he said it was too late for him to withdraw his invitation, so the two parties would have to be combined. But, you see, Mrs. Shudder had sold tickets for her recital at five dollars apiece, and she thought it would be unfair to let in Freshington's crowd

free. Freshington wouldn't listen to the idea of charging admission to his friends, so they appealed to me."

"It was embarrassing," said Mrs. Dobley.

"It was so embarrassing," said Van Rattler, "that I went out. Now I imagine that Freshington has possession of the studio, and has locked the door to keep the Shudder crowd out."

"Your studio must be very popular," said Mrs. Dobley. "Why don't you make them hire halls for their affairs?"

"Oh, it's too much of a novelty!" said Van Rattler. "Then, they like the snakes."

"The snakes!" said Mrs. Dobley.

"Why, I told you about Mr. Van Rattler's snakes," explained Mr. Dobley.

"But I didn't know they were here," said Mrs. Dobley.

"Oh, yes," said Van Rattler. "They live right in the studio, you know. The boa has the grippe to-day, and I had to put a red flannel round his throat and a porous plaster on his chest, but otherwise they are all in good condition. The asps are very lively."

"I am so anxious for you to see them," said Mr. Dobley, wondering if they were going to spend the evening on the sidewalk.

"I say," said Van Rattler, "let's go somewhere

else—a music hall, or some place. I think they are going to be noisy to-night, and the vipers get nasty if there is too much noise. Then think if Mrs. Shudder comes. These things are always so stupid. Then I can't stand Willie Wump—perhaps he's a friend of yours; but, really, he taught the boa to smoke cigarettes, and it became addicted to them, and I think that's the cause of its bad health."

"I'd love to see them," said Mrs. Dobley, shuddering.

"Oh, we must see them," said Dobley. "Here comes a policeman. Can't we get him to rap on the curb with his club and wake them up up there?"

Just then the door opened and Mr. Freshington appeared, greeting his guests warmly and apologizing for the locked door. He reproached Van Rattler for living in a house with a door that locked, as the party toiled upward, and explained that the Shudder party had gained entrance, and that the recital was now nearing its close.

"We allowed no encores, and we got the people interested in the snakes, so that it wasn't such a bore as usual," said Freshington. "The boa constrictor is sitting up taking a lively interest in everything."

"Has he coughed much?" asked Van Rattler.

"Mr. he seemed a little when Mrs. Shudder burned the incense in her Egyptian reading, but he's all right. Don't worry about him."

By this time the up-hill had been gained, and they entered the studio. The air was very thick with smoke, and the Dobleys could dimly discern a mass of Oriental hangings, swinging-lamps, and tapestries. There were music and conversation. A great Japanese jardiniere stood on a tabouret by the door. Mrs. Dobley called her husband's attention to it.

"Isn't it a beautiful thing," she said, peering into it. Dobley gazed admiringly at it.

Suddenly, with a loud hiss, a large green head rose on a slender, undulating neck, and wriggled at the Dobleys. Mrs. Dobley just suppressed a shriek.

"That's only one of the snakes," explained Mr. Freshington. "They are all over the studio. They have the boa out on the divan feeding him with ice cream. Van Rattler will be wild when he hears it. Here's the new nest of vipers."

He raised the cover of a glass and disclosed several wriggling heads, with beady eyes that glistened.

"There's a new rattlesnake, just come to-day, but Van Rattler is afraid to let it out. He hasn't had a chance to charm it yet."

"What a distinguished-looking woman that is in black talking to Mr. Van Rattler," said Mrs. Dobley. "She looks like a celebrity."

"She is," said Freshington in a low voice. "Her husband was the first man to be killed by the automobile. She felt his loss deeply, but she realized that it has given her a certain distinction!"

A sudden hush fell upon the room. "Mr. Van Rattler is going to charm the snakes," said a young woman who came up to Mrs. Dobley's side. "Then I shall do my dance. It's more effective after he's charmed the snakes and put them all away."

Van Rattler appeared, carrying a rug and a mandolin. He spread the rug on the floor and seated himself upon it cross-legged. Then he began to play a slow, weird melody that sounded doubly odd on the tinkling instrument he held.

Then, as though answering a mysterious summons, from different parts of the room glided as many as a dozen snakes; one a large boa, ornamented with the flannel bandage the artist had referred to. They glided and undulated about the musician in graceful circles, as though charmed by his music. Then he changed the music to a livelier measure, the snakes keeping time in their

mysterious glidings, some of them climbing up around Van Rattler's arms and neck. It was a most weird and uncanny sight, and if the man on the rug had been in costume instead of conventional dress, he would have looked like one of the veritable snake-charmers of the Orient. Suddenly he stopped, gathered his pets up in his hands and arms, and carried them off, the big boa-constrictor hanging around his neck.

"Now he's going to put them to bed," said Miss Wobbleton, "and I will get ready for my dance!" She vanished in the draperies.

Soon there was more music, and she appeared looking, as Dobley said, like a cosey corner. She was wrapped in some silken Oriental drapery of brilliant hue, and on her bare feet sandals were fastened. Her dance was almost as weird and fascinating as Van Rattler's performance with the snakes; but it was also uncanny, and looked as though it had been modelled after the convolutions of the big boa-constrictor. It ended in a series of desperate wriggles, and the dancer ran back into the draperies, while applause rewarded her efforts.

Then appeared a strange figure in the costume of a ballet-girl. It was Mr. Willie Wump, in his famous imitation of a gauze-skirted dancer. He was powdered and rouged. A blond wig, coquet-

tishly arranged, with a blue ribbon among its curls, crowned his head, and a dog-collar of pearls encircled his throat. Long kid gloves were drawn up on his arms, fastening in the shoulder-straps with tiny diamond pins. The bodice was girdled with blue satin, and the myriads of white skirts ended in two shapely legs encased in pink silk tights and gold-heeled satin slippers. He tripped gracefully to the centre of the room.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "with your kind permission I will now give you a few of my famous imitations." Everybody laughed. "Imitation of Washington Crossing the Delaware." He stretched one arm into the air and twisted his face into an expression of intrepid daring, with one knee bent slightly.

"Imitation of Napoleon at Saint Helena." He folded his arms and bowed his head gloomily on his chest.

"Imitation of Columbus Discovering America." He shaded his eyes with one hand and looked off into space.

"Imitation of Adam and Eve Leaving the Garden of Eden." He turned and tiptoed daintily into the draperies, returning in answer to the hand-clapping to execute a burlesque ballet-dance, after which he retreated with numerous bows and

courtesies, refusing to repeat the performance.

"He's funny, isn't he?" said Freshington.

"Much nicer than the snakes," said Mrs. Dobley.

"I'll present him to you," said Freshington, and went off for the dancer

"Mrs. Dobley, let me present Mr. Willie Wump," said Freshington. Mrs. Dobley bowed.

"Charmed, I am sure," said Mr. Wump. "Have you a good home, madam?"

Mrs. Dobley had no time to reply to this sally, for a Japanese man appeared with glasses of claret punch, which were pounced upon by Willie Wump and Freshington.

"It's funny," said Willie Wump, "that the better the society the weaker the punch. It's the invariable rule!"

"I'll tell you what it needs," said Dobley. "It needs a little——"

"It needs everything that ever went into a punch-bowl," said Van Rattler. "I don't mind people having parties here if they only wouldn't have punch."

"But nothing looks so lovely at a party as a punch-bowl," said Mrs. Dobley.

"And nothing tastes so bad as the punch usually," said Van Rattler.

"I have an idea," said Willie Wump, tossing

back his golden curls. "Pardon me a moment."

He tiptoed to the mysterious green room in the rear and came mincing back through the room, carrying a dress-suit case, simulating a feminine manner of carrying a heavy weight.

"What is he going to do now?" asked Mrs. Dobley, while all the other guests gathered around the gauze-skirted young man.

"Something ridiculous," said Van Rattler.

Mr. Wump opened the case and disclosed six gold-topped champagne bottles reclining in purple velvet racks. He dexterously opened them and poured them into the punch-bowl after the manner of a conjurer performing magical feats.

"Does he carry it round with him all the time?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Hush!" said Freshington. "They're his samples. He's agent for that brand!"

A PLOT THAT COLLAPSED

It was an understood thing in the Dobley household that the morning mail might be discussed over the breakfast-table. This morning Mrs. Dobley had two sheets of paper with a gold monogram written over in great black angular characters.

"It's from Cousin Leila!" she exclaimed, "and she is coming on to spend a few days with us while she does some shopping. I am perfectly delighted at the prospect! She is one of those charming girls that seem to be as nearly perfect as a human being could be in manner, disposition, dress, voice, looks, ideas—everything!"

"Cousin Leila is what you might call a sweet thing," said Mr. Dobley. "All those Baltimore girls are in the peach class."

"Isn't it most remarkable that she has never married?" said Mrs. Dobley. "She's been out three seasons and has had any number of offers. I suppose she is too much of a society girl."

"They say the nicest girls never do marry," said Mr. Dobley thoughtlessly.

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Dobley.

"That is to say," said Dobley hurriedly, "the old maids are always so perfect and self-sacrificing, and all that. The theory is, first, that they are of such intensely affectionate dispositions that they fall desperately in love when they are very young; then being exquisitely sensitive, they are disillusioned, and being unusually constant, they remain true to the first ideal."

"I see," said Mrs. Dobley; "but they are not all so lovely. There are many of the old-fashioned typical old maids, catlike, narrow-minded, envious, almost malicious things that never say a kind word about any one. So the theory is not entirely correct."

"There are exceptions," said Mr. Dobley gallantly, "and I have an opportunity to observe a most notable one."

Mrs. Dobley dimpled visibly when she spoke. "But Leila meets so many men, and dances and golfs and flirts with them; but she seems to regard them superficially, as a part of the social plan. She doesn't give them any individuality in her ideas of them."

"Funny! That's about the way in which Freshington regards girls," mused Dobley. "He says they are all exactly alike except as to points."

"Points?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"That is, looks, style, action, general appearance, you understand," explained Mr. Dobley. "He says society girls always talk about the very same things in the identically same way."

"Probably that is how he impresses them," said Mrs. Dobley. "Men always expect so much in a woman, and they give so very little themselves—that is, most men."

"Society," said Dobley, with the air of an authority, "is very apt to give every one a superficial point of view. People meet in society for many seasons without even knowing each other really. That is, during a regular season. A few weeks at a winter resort, or a trip on a yacht or a steamer, brings young people together sometimes; but pink teas never do."

"Yes, it was not until that summer at Bar Harbor that I even began to consider you," said Mrs. Dobley thoughtfully. "I began by being grateful when you taught me to swim."

"And even then," said Dobley, "I don't think I should have had the courage to propose——"

"Do you mean the time on the raft, when the tide came up and the squall, and we thought we should be washed out to sea?" asked Mrs. Dobley with interest.

"No, that was the first time. You refused me so decidedly then."

"I said I didn't see any sense in getting engaged when we were going to be drowned in bathing-suits, and no ring or announcement cards or anything," interposed Mrs. Dobley.

"At all events," said Dobley, "you were so unenthusiastic at the time that I do not think I should ever have proposed again——"

"That was at Aunt Alice's, in Baltimore," said Mrs. Dobley. "Leila's mother's; just fancy!"

"Yes; but I only called formally and had no intention of alluding to the matter again. It was the cosey corner that did it."

"The cosey corner?"

"Yes; I've always laid it to the cosey corner," said Dobley seriously. "They encourage propinquity. Sit on a chair opposite a girl on another chair, and while only a few feet separate you, you are in reality miles apart. But a cosey corner is different. The very draperies breathe Oriental romance and charm. The armor suggests brave deeds, valor, knighthood——"

"You can get beautiful battle-axes for forty-nine cents now at Hangem & Nailem's," interrupted Mrs. Dobley, "and shields from a dollar eighteen up."

"Then they were always lit by dim swinging-lamps," went on Dobley, "and girls have a way of unconsciously posing their feet attractively in

cosey corners, as in hammocks. I can distinctly recollect that evening in Baltimore. You wore scarlet morocco slippers, with Swiss rosettes——"

"Chiffon," corrected Mrs. Dobley.

"And passementerie stockings," continued Dobley.

"Never," said Mrs. Dobley firmly. "Not guilty."

"Well, there were little holes in them and a sort of lattice-work effect."

"You mean open work," said Mrs. Dobley.

"That's it," said Dobley; "but think how that impression has remained. I should never have seen your feet if you had sat in an ordinary chair."

"Perhaps not," said Mrs. Dobley. "You were strangely unobservant in those days. Now you notice everything new I get and ask me how much it has cost."

"One learns a great deal in a few years of matrimony," said Mr. Dobley. "Freshington is a perfect infant compared to me on the subject of trimmings and things. Why, he don't even know what reversible plaid is."

"Well, you only know since last Saturday when I told you," said Mrs. Dobley.

"Yes; but he doesn't know yet, although I took a quarter of an hour to explain it to him.

He said he had just learned what a box-plaited back was, and that would have to hold him for a while."

"He is a strange young man," said Mrs. Dobley.

"But he has many good points," said Dobley; "his faults are all of the negative sort."

"Marriage would improve him," said Mrs. Dobley.

"But he has one of those deep, intense natures and can never get over his first disappointment in love. He's grown cynical. When a man asks him, he says he thinks women are all alike; and when a girl asks him, he says all women are charming," said Dobley.

"How I wish he might meet Leila," said Mrs. Dobley. "It would completely revolutionize his ideas. She's never met any man that hasn't become perfectly fascinated."

"But would it be fair to Freshington to lead him right into the lion's den?" said Dobley.

"If you are alluding to Leila," said Mrs. Dobley, "I am sure she never intends anything. It just happens. Then she might like Freshington, and he really is a nice fellow, and he has——"

"Has money," said Dobley. "Yes, he has money to burn."

"If he could only get a good match," said Mrs.

Dobley. "We might invite them both to dinner?"

"And say that Leila cooked everything on the table," suggested Dobley.

"Then I've been thinking," said Mrs. Dobley, "that a cosey corner would add very much to the appearance of the library."

"Do you get 'em ready made?" asked Dobley; "or are they imported from the Orient in sections and then put together?"

"You can have them put up by the decorators," said Mrs. Dobley, "or you can put them up yourself. They are very simple. A paper of tacks and a stepladder and a few draperies are all that is needed. An hour's work will fix up a beautiful one."

"Count me out," said Dobley. "I remember the time you held the ladder while I hung pictures, and I put my head through a valuable landscape painting, and lay unconscious for an hour with a gold frame around my neck."

"That was your own fault," said Mrs. Dobley, "you tried to hold a hammer in your mouth and talk at the same time. I thought you wanted the ladder pushed closer to the wall. You were just reaching for a point farther up."

"And standing on one foot on the top of the ladder to do so," said Dobley. "You can make it

an invariable rule never to attempt to push a stepladder that has a hundred-and-eighty-pound man poised on one foot on its apex balancing a hundred-pound picture in one hand and holding on to nothing. No matter what you think he says about pushing the ladder, don't you do it."

"Well, a cosey corner is easy, and I shall fix it up myself," said Mrs. Dobley. "Besides, if Leila should get engaged, it will be lovely to think that the decorators didn't do it."

That evening, when Dobley came home late—having received a telegram requesting him to get dinner out—he found Mrs. Dobley apparently deep in the work of erecting the corner. The library presented the appearance of an Eastern bazaar.

"At least," said Mrs. Dobley, "you will hand me the tacks as I want them. I can't run up and down the ladder every time I want a tack."

"If I've got to be caddie in this game, I might as well do the whole thing," said Dobley, resigning himself to his fate. "But understand, Mrs. Dobley, you are to keep away from the ladder and give your impressions from a distance. I don't wish you to be seized with any impulse to change the base of these steps while I am upon them."

"I'll stay 'way over here," said Mrs. Dobley,

seating herself in an easy-chair, "and I'll tell you just how it looks. I'm so tired from shopping that I can hardly stand. Suppose you put up the roof and the background first."

"Do you wish the Chinese pagoda or the Persian mosque effect?" asked Dobley. "Or do you prefer the chaste Italian style of architecture? I see you have all nations represented in your materials."

"Just mix them all up," said Mrs. Dobley. "It doesn't really matter. In fact, it's more artistic."

"What is this gold-lined horse blanket for?" asked Mr. Dobley.

"That's a real vestment from India," said Mrs. Dobley. "Put that where it will show up well."

"And these Catskill-Mountain staffs?"

"Can't you see they are Zulu spears? You just cross them and tie them in the centre and tack the stuff over them. That's it. Now it's practically built. But you must dispose the draperies carelessly. They mustn't look too fixed."

"Just throw them at the wall and put a tack in it," said Dobley. "The only rule of architecture in putting up these things is to tack everything in sight."

"It is getting to look like a real cosey corner

now," said Mrs. Dobley delightedly. "We should have had one long ago. It will be too cute for anything."

"Suppose they should neither of them notice this?" said Dobley. "We'll have to drive them into this room and lock up all the rest of the house."

"It is the next best thing to a conservatory," said Mrs. Dobley. "We'll explain that the painters are at work in the drawing-room, and the carpets up and everything in disorder."

"Where does this cornucopia go?" asked Mr. Dobley. "It's getting to look like a Christmas tree, this corner. Have you got any candles to put around here and there, and a few oranges and some popcorn?"

"That's a sheik's headdress," said Mrs. Dobley. "You must have one in a cosey corner or it isn't a cosey corner. And here's this Italian iron lantern."

"It's exactly like a lamp-post without the post," said Mr. Dobley. "Does this hang on a tack too?"

"I'd put in two tacks for that if I were you," suggested Mrs. Dobley. "It's best to be quite secure. Mr. Freshington is surely coming to dinner to-morrow, isn't he?"

"He has so assured me."

"And he doesn't know any one else is to be here?"

"I didn't mention it."

"Leila will arrive by an early train, and I'll have her put on one of her prettiest gowns. Then when you come in I'll say you've brought some one home to dine informally, and that he is a delightful young man. Then during dinner you must do your best to draw Mr. Freshington out so that he will be at his very best. I'll get Leila talking about music, and you admire all the things she does, and I'll side with Mr. Freshington. Then after dinner I'll suggest having coffee in here. Don't pretend that this corner hasn't been up for years, you know."

"I'll act as though it's an heirloom," said Dobley.

"You arrange to have some one call you up on the telephone and——"

"Go out?" suggested Dobley pleasantly.

"You needn't really go out. Just go quietly upstairs, and you leave them to me."

"Do you expect him to propose in the first round?" asked Dobley. "You don't know Freshington as I do."

"Certainly not! But I expect that he will be tremendously interested, and Leila herself will do the rest. You see, the way it is, Leila is just

in fun, and they think she is in earnest. She makes each one think that he has made the deepest kind of an impression. It isn't so difficult to make a man think that."

"No?" said Dobley.

"Then he begins to feel sorry for the girl, and wonder why it is that he is so tremendously fascinating. That is the way with Leila."

"It's really a system," said Dobley. "It's a case of awakened pity for the girl on the part of the man, that gradually dawns into pity for himself."

"Exactly," said Mrs. Dobley; "but don't you dare to warn Freshington."

"It will please me to see him caught," said Dobley.

The next evening the Dobley dining-room was a dream of fine linen and silver and flowers and shaded candles. Mrs. Dobley's pretty cousin looked charming in a white organdie frock, while Mrs. Dobley herself was radiant with the undoubted success of her dinner and the apparent success of her matchmaking designs. With difficulty she restrained her jubilant glances of triumph from Mr. Dobley, and finally a very happy party filed into the library for coffee.

Then the telephone bell rang, and Mr. Dobley held an audible conversation with some one at the

club; apologizing to his guests, said he would return immediately, and went away. After bringing out various attractions of the Dobley home in the way of amateur photographs and cameras, Mrs. Dobley led the way to the music room, which was an alcove off the library, and begged her cousin to sing. Mr. Freshington was enchanted, and began to hum a love song he had composed. Then Mrs. Dobley was called out by the cook.

She stole up to the sitting-room, where Mr. Dobley was playing a game of solitaire. He looked up questioningly as she entered.

"It's getting along beautifully," she said; "far better than I expected. Mr. Freshington is very much impressed, and while Leila always acts that way, I think she really admires him. Just listen to the piano."

"A sort of fingers-straying-idly-over-the-ivory-keys effect," remarked Dobley.

"When you hear people play like that, well, it's always a sure sign they are more interested in each other than in the music. And didn't Leila look perfectly lovely when she sat in the corner? I made Mr. Freshington sit beside her, and took a flashlight of them. What do you think of that?"

"A capital idea," said Mr. Dobley. "The music has stopped!"

"And Leila's so fond of music! You can never get her away from the piano."

"How long is the intermission?" asked Dobley.

"You must go quietly out the back way and then come up and ring the bell. Then say that you forgot your latch-key. I will run downstairs, and when we go in, suppose you propose a theatre party or something and see how Freshington acts."

"All right," said Dobley. "I'll tinkle that bell in two minutes. I suppose the maid will think it odd my sneaking out like this and then finding me on the stoop when she opens the door. I'd better give her a wink."

"Do nothing of the sort," said Mrs. Dobley. "It's not her business to think." And Dobley vanished.

Mrs. Dobley listened eagerly for the bell. She found this mystery perfectly delightful. Soon she heard it. Then she heard Dobley say, "Yes, forgot my key." Then came a horrible crash from the library. She rushed down the stairs and confronted Dobley in the hall. He looked troubled.

They went in. The cosey corner and its draperies were in a heap, having collapsed, evidently, on the heads of Cousin Leila and Mr. Freshing-

ton. They were helped out of the wreck by Mr. Dobley and his wife, who apologized for the accident. Both victims were polite enough to laugh, although Freshington's coat was ornamented with candle wax, and he had a lump over his eye caused by the fall of the Italian lamp.

"What do you have those horrid things for, anyhow?" asked Cousin Leila.

"It was Mrs. Dobley's idea," said Dobley.

"I don't believe it," said Freshington. "I believe that you originated, designed, and put it up."

"But, my dear boy," said Dobley, "no one ever sits in a cosey corner! What did you take it for—a hammock?"

POSSIBILITIES OF PUGILISM

"I DON'T think we do enough good in the world," said Mrs. Dobley to her husband. "That is to say, we do only that which others have done before us and will do again. What a magnificent plan it would be if some one of the world's genuises would make himself known by originating great charities on novel lines. It would appeal to people's imagination, and would therefore interest them more than the old schemes. Think of the idealism of a life devoted to generating plans for the bettering of conditions of humanity! I think it would be a wonderful work. There are so many people besides the poor in need of charity."

"I have heard of a society downtown," said Mr. Dobley, "the purpose of which is to provide champagne luncheons for struggling typewriters."

"I don't mean anything relating to the material needs," said Mrs. Dobley, "but to the spiritual. There ought to be some plan by which people who are discouraged or downcast with life's burdens could be reached and aided by counsel and advice."

"I have long thought," said Mr. Dobley seriously, "of a scheme for developing the literary and artistic natures of pugilists."

"You never can be serious," said Mrs. Dobley.

"I am entirely serious," said Mr. Dobley. "I think the pugilists are misunderstood. I think the profession is bound to advance from the low grade it occupies at present to the highest scale. The twentieth century will witness contests between gladiators—educated, intelligent specimens of humanity who will be obliged to keep up to a high standard: not only a physical standard, but a mental and moral one. In the universities the men are obliged to meet rigid requirements before they are allowed to take an active part in athletics. This, I think, will be the place that pugilism will attain in the future. To-day the term pugilist is one of reproach, but the day will come when all that will be changed. There are champion pugilists in the colleges to-day who could easily triumph over the professional fighters of the day for the reason that they could bring superior intelligence and logic, as well as science and force, to bear upon their opponents. One of these days we shall have ideal gladiators representing the highest type of humanity."

"Pugilists are not human," said Mrs. Dobley. "They are all brutal in their intincts. How can

any one read of the dreadful conflicts in which they take part without feeling horrified that such things can exist in this civilized age, and that civilized men can regard it as a sport?"

"I am not defending pugilism," said Mr. Dobley, "but I think we should do more for the pugilist. Universal condemnation never bettered any condition of affairs. Another thing: the popular opinion of the pugilist is an entirely erroneous one. Not only has he his human, but he has also his humane side. I may say that the æsthetic nature of the pugilist is more in evidence than that of the ordinary man of business. It is unsuspected, but it exists. There is not a fighter of note who does not feel keenly that he is outside the pale of respectability in the public eye."

"I don't think they care anything about it," said Mrs. Dobley. "I don't think they have feelings like other people."

"But they have," said Mr. Dobley, "and the pathetic efforts which some of them make to get into——"

"Into society, I suppose?" said Mrs. Dobley.

"No, to get into some other walk of life, shows that they have a very keen appreciation of their position in the social scale. Yet take the average pugilist; he is an ordinarily respectable individual whose profession is his greatest drawback.

As a rule, he is working for his home and his family, like other good citizens. As he dances about the ring administering upper cuts and jolts he is thinking of how much his success will enable him to add to the baby's bank account. But the average estimate of the successful pugilist ignores any possible good that may be in him. He is pictured as a horny-handed, unrefined, irreligious, bad-mannered, dissipated person. In point of fact, he is no more so than the men in other vocations."

"What a ridiculous idea," said Mrs. Dobley. "If they were men of that sort, they would not remain in such work. They would seek other fields."

"That as an argument," said Mr. Dobley, "is almost Gilbertesquely paradoxical. From the extreme view that the fighter is a brute you jump to the idea that he is noble enough to sacrifice a profession in which he find himself suddenly famous and successful, and all for a principle. A man who would do that would be of an unusually noble nature. Most of these fighters become so through environment. They drift into the trade as other men do into other lines of business. If successful, they are confronted with the fact that they can make more money in less time than in any other profession in the world."

"The idea of making money in such a way!" said Mrs. Dobley.

"This sordid money-making trait," said Mr. Dobley, "is unfortunately universal. The pugilist possesses it with others of his race. But, on the other hand, he values money less. The successful pugilist in his present status is to me one of the saddest figures in modern life. He is misunderstood and misrepresented, and his better nature simply stifles for want of development."

"How would you propose to reach his better self and elevate his profession?" asked Mrs. Dobley, with a trace of sarcasm in her voice.

"Mr. Freshington and I——" began Mr. Dobley.

"Ah, I see, Mr. Freshington!" said Mrs. Dobley softly.

"Mr. Freshington and I," continued Mr. Dobley, "have given this matter much thought. We have always believed in the idea that the perfect human being would embody physical supremacy, as well as mental and spiritual. We have discussed the idea of a pugilists' club, where the members might enjoy facilities for education through lectures, and yet they could not be lectures in the usual sense. They would be more in the nature of talks."

"Heart-to-heart talks with pugilists; that sounds like something from a comic opera," said Mrs. Dobley.

"No, it's too good for that," said Dobley. "But this club would provide the best music; it is surprising how the pugilist of to-day runs to music. I was more then surprised when one of the ex-champions told me that he was writing an opera. He said that during the hours when he was not exercising he sat at the piano improvising passages that were to be incorporated in his master work. It struck me as being very remarkable that the gnarled fists that were trained to do such deadly work on the anatomy of his fellow-men could also call forth strains of melody, dictated by a brain presumed by the narrow-minded to be savage."

"Perhaps the music was savage?" suggested Mrs. Dobley.

"I talked with him about this musical work of his, and he told me a remarkable incident of one of his encounters, in which he had been defeated. When he received his final defeat and became unconscious, he said that he heard bells ringing in chimes in his ears, and the music was that of his own opera. There was a poetic pathos in this that touched me deeply.

"Strangely enough, I was talking shortly after-

ward with another pugilist, who had defeated the opera writer in this very battle, and who had a very bitter feeling toward him, owing to the recriminations that had passed between them. During the course of our conversation he said:

"'I've composed the words and music of a new song to-day.'

"'A song?' I said in astonishment. 'That's a most remarkable thing! Did you know that Mr. Blank,' mentioning his rival, 'was writing an opera?'

"In a moment the man's face changed to an expression of the most intense disgust. 'What is he writing it with—his feet?' he asked rudely.

"I saw at once that if this artistic talent existed with such an extreme jealousy of the same gift in another, it was possible of development of the highest order. What gift of all in the list would one be less likely to associate with a pugilist than music? Yet here were two notable men in this profession, both with gifts for musical composition. I talked for hours about this with Freshington, and we agreed that when our Society for Developing the Æsthetic Side of the Pugilist was established, music would have first place."

"How could you ever get them to agree sufficiently to meet on an equal basis for any such

purpose? There is such jealousy between them that they would probably get fighting during a concert," said Mrs. Dobley.

"Art would be the influence that would subdue their meaner instincts," said Mr. Dobley. "The fact is pugilists are, as a rule, more tractable and more easily led than other men. They are like overgrown boys more than men. Their muscles are developed at the expense of their other qualities. But a longing for something noble is implanted in the nature of every human being, and my theory is that it could be developed in the pugilist to a remarkable extent."

"Suppose some of them didn't like music?" said Mrs. Dobley.

"We should have other branches besides music," said Mr. Dobley. "We should have classes in anatomy and physiology. One leading fighter has the ambition to become a doctor. Every time he hits a man he diagnoses the effects of the blow. Every time he lands a telling punch on the solar plexus of his opponent the thought of his ambition spurs him on. One of these days, when he realizes his dream, he will go about curing his patients and writing prescriptions, and they will never dream that he once danced around a ring as a fighter in order to earn the cash to *pay for* his education."

"How did you ever get such a queer idea in your head?" asked Mrs. Dobley curiously.

"When Freshington and I were at college," said Mr. Dobley, "we were, like all boys, interested in pugilists. When one of the champions took a cottage a few miles from the university town to train for a contest he was to have in a month or two, we decided that we would go over and see him, study his training, and investigate his personality. At this same time our ideas of a champion pugilist were like everybody else's, rather prejudiced. We drove over one day to the training quarters, and what do you think we found the pugilist doing?"

"I haven't an idea," said Mrs. Dobley.

"He was sitting on the piazza of his cottage with his wife, helping her to make a dress for the baby. His department was buttonholes. She was a very busy girl, and she decided that during the resting spells between his exercising he might just as well assist her. So she taught him to sew, and she told us that he made the most beautiful buttonholes. She showed them to us, and we thought they were fine; but, of course, we didn't know much about it. Then she got Freshington and me to try to make them, and we threw up our hands. The strangest thing was that the man had got so proud of his proficiency

that he liked to make them. All their clothes had more buttons on them than were necessary on account of the strange whim of the man's."

"Buttonholes are very difficult to make," said Mrs. Dobley thoughtfully. "Perhaps he may have been a tailor at some time."

"Well, at all events, they were a very charming couple, and the baby was great fun. We used to go over every day or two and play ball while the baby umpired the game. The pugilist's wife was only a girl, and he was very little more than a boy, and she was a great pitcher. He had taught her to pitch a low curved ball that was a dandy. The baby sat on a shawl at one side of the field and applauded the good plays by crowing, but it sided with its mother every time. When the game was over, we all drank water with oatmeal in it, prepared by the trainer.

"By degrees we found out that the match had been an elopement, and that the girl's folks were opposed to it, so strongly that they refused to see her or write to her. And the pugilist had promised that if he won this fight he was going to give up the ring and settle down on account of the baby. The girl, we agreed, felt the separation and quarrel with her family more than she would admit, and she wasn't very strong—just a slim little girl, with big blue eyes, exactly like

the baby's in their expression. One day we went over and she was in bed. She had caught a cold, and the pugilist was nurse. It was perfectly wonderful to see how he took care of her. But she died, and her people came on and took her body away and never even asked to see the child. So the fighter was left alone with his trainers and a six-months-old baby to look after. He was just about broken-hearted, and Freshington and I tried to cheer him up all we could, but we played no more ball games.

"One summer night we both rode over on horseback with the idea that we'd get the fighter to take a gallop with us back to town. We thought he was getting morbid and melancholy, and his trainers said that unless he got over it he'd never win the coming battle that was now only a few weeks off.

"We tied the horses at the gate and went up the path to the piazza. It was getting dark, but we could see him sitting in the hammock around the corner, with the baby in his arms, singing to it. So we walked up quietly in order not to wake it and spoke to him, but he never answered us; just kept on rocking the hammock softly and singing away to the child. So we walked away and found the big trainer huddled up on the steps crying like a child."

"What was he crying about?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Well, it appears that the baby had died that evening, but the father didn't seem to realize it, and had taken it out to put it to sleep, just as he had done ever since its mother died. The trainer said it was all over with the fight."

"Was that why he cried?" asked Mrs. Dobley, sniffling in her handkerchief.

"No, he was crying for the whole outfit."

"What did you and Mr. Freshington do?" she asked.

"We? Oh, we—yes, I recollect now, we sat down and cried too."

IN WHICH THE DOBLEYS GO A-FLATTING

"I HAVE a charming idea of spending the summer," said Mrs. Dobley, clapping her hands delightedly over the breakfast-table.

"If it is a coaching-trip through Germany, or a houseboat on the Thames, you may count me out," said Mr. Dobley, who had grown to fear these exuberant outbursts of enthusiasm on his wife's part.

"It is nothing so commonplace," said Mrs. Dobley. "It is simply a gypsyish plan of doing exactly as we please all summer long; stopping in town when we wish, or going away indefinitely without caring anything about having to leave a big house. We'll close up the house."

"Do you propose that we carry tepees, like the Indians, or establish a permanent camp under canvas somewhere?" asked Mr. Dobley.

"Neither!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley triumphantly. "I propose that we take a flat somewhere; furnish it up with summery Japanese rugs and bamboo doors and wicker chairs, just like a summer cottage."

"You mean that we should live a double life, having one home here and a flat elsewhere? Let me understand you, please."

"Nothing of the sort," said Mrs. Dobley. "Don't you remember that last year we agreed that the coolest, pleasantest place we found was New York, and how lovely it was to take a day off from the seaside?"

"Oh, then you mean to establish a cheerful summer home in New York?" said Mr. Dobley. "But what is the objection to remaining right here in our happy, high-priced home?"

"That's just it," said Mrs. Dobley. "We could economize all through summer. Besides, it wouldn't be any fun to stay here! We'd just have to keep on being respectable! We have to live up to the house and keep regular hours for meals. It's too monotonous."

"If you summer in a flat, you'll find respectability exciting in the fall," said Dobley; "that is, I've heard Freshington say so."

"My idea is," said Mrs. Dobley, "to have just one Japanese man, who will do all the work, and who will be prepared to get up dinners and suppers in a chafing-dish at a moment's notice. We will dispense with all ceremony. Don't you see what a complete change it will be? We won't even have to dress for dinner unless we wish.

Then people won't know where we live and can't call on us."

"Where do you propose that we should found this Flatters' Retreat?" asked Mr. Dobley. "Had we better go under assumed names, or shall we adopt some simple disguise?"

"We won't have to do anything so silly," said Mrs. Dobley. "We shall simply disappear without announcing our intentions or sending out any cards. People may suppose we have gone away in a yacht, or taken a cottage somewhere. No one will really know where we are, and we can enjoy the idea that people think we are away when we are really right in town."

"It would be much more mysterious to take another name and a disguise for the summer," said Dobley. "I might wear glasses and an English suit and black whiskers, and you could dye your hair red—one of those Titian shades. Then people wouldn't even know us."

"It would seem too suspicious," said Mrs. Dobley, "although I admit it would be great fun. But people are suspicious enough in flats, anyhow."

"But fancy our feelings when the Society Notes make mention of the fact that the John Dobleys have closed their house in Gramercy Park and have taken a cheap flat in Harlem for the sum-

mer. It would ruin us. When people want to do things of that sort, they go to Paris and live in the restaurants. If you try to do it in New York, it isn't picturesque at all, and people begin to come in with bills. No, we shall have to take another name. I should suggest Blotskovitchky. It would give the impression that we are Russians, and everything we do would be excused. Then it would be mysterious; it sounds as though a title went with it. It would also look well on one of those little tin plates they put over the letter-boxes in the hall, where you click the door open from upstairs after host and visitor have yelled at each other through a tube."

"I don't intend that we should settle in that kind of a queer flat," said Mrs. Dobley. "I intend to have spacious, airy rooms, lots of sunlight, and conveniences of every kind. Why you have no idea how comfortably they build those houses nowadays until you read the advertisements."

"I prefer those that are laid out like a train of cars," said Dobley, "with the rooms coupled on to one another. I always feel right in the bosom of a family when I call at one of those flats. You go in a rear-end door and walk through all the cars and take a seat in the engine, which is also the parlor car. When any of the family happen

to have retired, they cover their head with blankets while visitors are brought through, and you are supposed not to notice them, even if they are your best friends."

"Here is one advertisement that appeals to me," said Mrs. Dobley. "Just listen: 'Look at these magnificent new apartments in the Out-of-Sight—the most exceptional location in Manhattan—rents twenty-five per cent. cheaper than any other high-class apartment—strictly fireproof—steam heat—electric light and elevator—all light corner rooms—open plumbing—hot water furnished—tiled bathrooms, needle, showers—gas-ranges and logs—filtered Croton water—parquet floors—cabinet trimmed—marble pastry-table in kitchen—cellar chutes—convenient to elevated and all surface cars—only a few more left.' What do you think of that?"

"It reminds me," said Dobley reflectively, "of a man who advertised for a place as a gardener. He stated that he was a neat, capable, experienced, reliable, educated, refined man, who could speak three languages; understood pruning and trimming hedges and the care of horses. I did not want a gardener, but it seemed to me at the time as though this man would be a good all-round sort of person to have in any capacity."

"Your judgment is so keen and correct in all

cases," said Mrs. Dobley, while her husband inclined his head slightly and seriously, "that I want you to go with me to look at this flat. If you approve of it, I think we had better take it and camp out for the summer."

So the Dobleys proceeded northward and across town by various transfer routes until they came nearly to the city limits.

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," said Mr. Dobley, "if we could get fresh eggs, vegetables, and good roads up here. And it's so interesting getting here. We have experienced every mode of travel except the underground system, and I think a tunnel would be an improvement on that cut-across lots. But it is positively sylvan once you get here. Look at the cow tied to a stake over there in the offing, and the goat poised on the crag against the sky. It makes me feel as though we were in the Alps, and I long to yodel."

"The air is beautiful!" said Mrs. Dobley, sniffing delightedly. "It's so different!"

"And there's so much of it!" said Mr. Dobley. "You get that peculiar bracing effect that one finds on a mountain-top."

"It makes you wish to drink in great draughts of ozone," said Mrs. Dobley delightedly.

"Yes; I have often experienced that mountain-peak thirst with not a restaurant within fifteen

miles," said Mr. Dobley. "It is a unique experience!"

The Out-of-Sight was an imposing building, which Dobley said looked like a Home for the Blind, because the decorations jarred him somewhat. There was a view of the river and the Palisades in the distance. A man in a blue denim suit came from some underground depth of the flat and jingled keys while he looked over the Dobleys.

"Wanter see the flat?" he asked.

"We should like to observe its numerous and unaccustomed beauties," said Mr. Dobley. "We have been lured from home by your advertisement, but we want the flat broken to us gently. Don't show it to us all at once. Joy sometimes kills."

The janitor eyed Dobley queerly and led the way into a small elevator car, in which he and his would-be tenants were crowded with difficulty.

"All we need," said Dobley in a low tone to his wife, "is some imported olive oil and half a lemon to feel that we are high-class sardines."

The janitor tugged at a wire rope that passed through the car, but it never budged.

"It acts like this sometimes," said the janitor. "It gets as contrary as a mule, and again it's

gentle as a kitten. Then sometimes it shoots up like a rocket and strikes the roof with a bang. The tenants enjoy it so! But we had to stop the children taking rides for fun. They seemed to think it was some sort of a chute arrangement for their amusement—a children's playground."

"It's in one of its pouting moods to-day apparently," said Dobley. "Suppose we try the stairs?"

"It's on the thirteenth floor," said the janitor. "You'd better wait till it limbers up."

Suddenly the car with a few convulsive jerks and groans started upward in a series of slow jumps, stopping between floors, as though unwilling to proceed farther, and then going on in a succession of quick leaps.

"It acts exactly like a kangaroo," said Dobley. "This alone would compensate any one for living here."

"All new elevators act like this," said Mrs. Dobley. "I should much prefer it to act this way than to go up suddenly, as some elevators do. This shows that the safety catches are in good order!"

The car stopped, and with a clanking of bolts and bars the door was opened and the Dobleys were released.

"It reminds me somehow of a condemned cell,"

said Dobley. "I suppose the chair is at the end of this dark passage?"

"In case of fire in the elevator shaft," said the janitor, "this hall leads to that window at the end, where we have rope fire-escapes that we drill the tenants in using twice a week. Then there are hand-grenades and axes in brackets on the wall, as you see."

"What a cheerful, inspiring sight it must be to be confronted with these simple safeguards as one enters one's home! It gives such a feeling of perfect peace and security!" remarked Dobley admiringly.

The janitor opened a door and led the way through a gloomy, narrow gangway, into a room papered in red, "with gold freckles," again quoting Mr. Dobley. The ceiling had clusters of scarlet circles over its surface, set in green leaves.

"What a charming summer effect!" exclaimed Dobley. "A tomato-and-lettuce salad, as I live! With a bottle of mayonnaise painted in one corner, this room would be ideal for a dining-room."

"These is the parlors," said the janitor, "and them is roses—not tomatoes. The lady who lived here had green brocade satin furniture, with gold legs, and she had the room done up in this way."

"Let us see the kitchen, please," said Mrs. Dobley. "After all, the kitchen is the most important room in a house. Show me the kitchen and I can tell you what sort of people live in a place."

The janitor proceeded through a dim and dingy room to a dark, cavelike apartment in the rear.

"This must be one of those new and fashionable beefsteak dungeons," said Mr. Dobley. "I declare, there is nothing missing in these modern flats!"

Suddenly the janitor flooded the room with electric light, and disclosed the fact that the room was a kitchen, one sink, and two tubs long by a dumbwaiter door and a gas-range wide.

"This range is a 'Baby Grand,'" said Dobley, reading from the oven door. "They have a much richer tone than the uprights."

"I thought the rooms were all light," said Mrs. Dobley disappointedly.

"All you have to do is to press a button and they are light as day," said the janitor. "It's clouded over a bit since we came in."

At this moment from under the sink a strange insect procession emerged, taking a winding course over the floor, while Mrs. Dobley's eyes protruded in horror.

"Look!" she said, pointing at the pageant. It was a row of water-bugs in perfect Indian file, headed by a sedate, fully grown specimen.

The janitor stepped forward to cut off their advance, but Mr. Dobley held him back.

"No crossing the lines without a badge while the march is in progress," he said. "This, ladies and gentlemen, is the celebrated tribe of Ogallalas, headed by Chief Rain-in-the-Face."

"They move just like a funeral!" said Mrs. Dobley, shuddering.

"You wouldn't have the coaches go ahead of the hearse, would you?" asked Mr. Dobley. "I can fancy I hear a dead march. Which way lies the cemetery?"

"They'll never hurt you," said the janitor. "They are tame."

"Tame?" said Dobley. "They're trained. It's the most marvellous exhibition of intelligence I ever saw! And yet they say insects have no brains!"

"Some people try to kill the poor little things," said the janitor; "for my part, I'd sooner have 'em than dogs or children. They're less bother."

Dobley was reading a set of rules on the wall. "Projectiles received from ten to eleven"? He looked inquiringly at the janitor.

"We have a new system here," said the janitor.

"We have no more hauling up and down of waiters. Each flat has a chute and set of projectiles. Ashes, garbage, and trash of all sorts are sent down in the projectiles at the hour set, and rolls, milk, and groceries are delivered in the same way."

"Firing at sunrise and sunset, I presume?" said Dobley with interest.

"It's a great system," went on the janitor. "From ten to eleven you'd imagine a battle was in progress. The cook in flat A—fourth, rear, west—has become a sharpshooter. She is so expert that all the other servants in the house are jealous of her."

Mrs. Dobley shrieked and tried to climb on the gas-range at this juncture, gathering her skirts about her ankles. A large dove-colored mouse was standing on its hind-legs looking through the glass door in the cupboard.

"That's only Admiral Dewey," said the janitor, with a laugh. "You see, the lady who lived here was very fond of animals. She had a cage of white mice, but one day she grew sorry for them and gave them all their freedom. The result is that this apartment house has a collection of these rare pearl-gray mice—just like Dewey. He does all sorts of tricks—climbs up in the canary's cage and eats seed and takes a bath.

Why, he'll eat sugar out of your hand. Then there's Sampson, Schley, Hobson, and a lot more. They answer to their names."

The janitor opened the cupboard door and threw in some crumbled cheese to Dewey, who turned two somersaults and stood on his hind-legs in acknowledgment.

"Isn't he a bird?" said the janitor. "If you take this flat, you must let me come in and see him once in a while. I've grown to like the little fellow."

"We certainly will make arrangements to have the live stock properly cared for," said Dobley. "I think we could charge admission to this place as a permanent circus and give special matinées for children."

"We only take strictly private families," said the janitor. "We want no actors in this outfit. The rule is to let in no families with dogs or children. But what are you to do? They smuggle them in in crates and barrels after the lease is signed. You can't do a thing! There's a family moved in downstairs—third flat D, front, east. They swore they had no encumbrances of any kind, and two days after they were settled along comes a golf-case and a champagne-basket by express. Next day a two-year-old boy and a fox terrier were in the flat. Visitors, they said.

You see, they will get around it! I'm thinking of having a fumigating furnace in the cellar and making it a rule to put all packages over three pounds in weight in the oven before they're sent upstairs."

"A capital plan," said Dobley.

"This is the butler's pantry," said the janitor, showing an aperture in the wall. "You must pick out a tall, thin one. And it's a mistake to put any heavy-weight cooks in that kitchen. It wears the paint off the walls."

"What is the rent?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Only thirty-five hundred a year," said the janitor. "Summer rate."

"Does that include the pets?" asked Dobley anxiously.

"Just as it stands," said the janitor.

"We'll think about it," said Dobley.

"Well, you'll have to decide quick," said the janitor. "There's two parties just crazy to get it. They went down to the City Hall this morning to try and get a copy of their marriage certificate."

"Marriage certificate?" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley. "Why, what is that for?"

"No one gets in here without a certificate," said the janitor, "and references from the last janitor *they* lived with. I've had to make it a rule."

"But we have no marriage certificate," said Mrs. Dobley blankly.

"Well, I'm sorry, but I can't break the rule. I had a couple bring a family Bible up here in a go-cart yesterday as proof. But, as I told them, what proof is that? That's too easy."

"But I have my photograph taken in my wedding dress," said Mrs. Dobley; "and orange blossoms and all."

"Sorry, but I can do nothing for you here. We've got to be particular, and I can't make any exceptions. It's a rule of my own." He bowed the Dobleys out.

"Well, I certainly think you might have told him that we were really married!" said Mrs. Dobley reproachfully. "You just stood there absolutely quiet. I don't wonder he was suspicious!"

"I thought it best," said Dobley thoughtfully, "to allow his suspicions to become rooted. I feared that he would lease us the menagerie. We would have to hire a keeper to look after the collections and feed the animals. Come, let us go back to the centre of town."

CAPSULES FOR DINNER

"ONE of the plans that Mr. Freshington and I have in mind for the coming weeks," said Mr. Dobley to his wife, "is the establishment of a Stay-at-Home Club."

"What will it be like?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"It will be devoted to matters that people are too busy to think about during the winter," said Mr. Dobley, "and its most interesting department will be a culinary kindergarten."

"Do you mean a cooking class?" inquired Mrs. Dobley.

"I mean a class in culinary education," explained Mr. Dobley. "This is a subject in which we Americans are still in the primer stage. We have the best hotels in the world and the finest chefs, but about the culinary art, or even about the proper foods, and when to eat them, and how they should be cooked, we know next to nothing."

"Is this to be a social club or a philanthropic idea?" asked Mrs. Dobley. "Will ladies be admitted to membership, or will it be one of those horrid eating clubs?"

"It will be both social and philanthropic," said

Mr. Dobley. "It will refine, educate, and gradually ennoble its members. Food has more to do with the workings of the mind and the subsequent actions of the human being than we imagine. The trouble is that cooking is not dignified, as it should be, among the accomplishments. It is regarded by many as a subject to be dealt with in the cosey corner of a country newspaper. Individually we know it is important, but we refuse to accord it the place generally that it deserves. Freshington thinks that a culinary kindergarten will fill the bill."

"But don't you think it is better that people do not attach so much importance to such things?" said Mrs. Dobley. "We should probably deteriorate in other ways."

"A proper knowledge of food and a higher education in the cuisine would not have that effect," said Mr. Dobley. "It would first impress upon us the important fact that we all eat too much and too often and at the wrong times. One of the first results we should aim at would be the abolition of the luncheon habit."

"What a dreadful plan!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley.

"Not at all," said Mr. Dobley. "The luncheon habit is a hideous mistake. Nine people out of ten eat the midday meal, not because they are

hungry, but for the reason that others do so. Women, I may say, are the chief offenders in this respect."

"I should rather omit breakfast than luncheon," said Mrs. Dobley, "just as they do abroad."

"The coffee-and-roll fad," said Mr. Dobley, "is pernicious. It is the result of the deadly late supper. No, breakfast and dinner should be the two principal meals for those who really require food. But Freshington and I propose to eradicate finally this idea that food is absolutely necessary. At all events we shall try to introduce and establish the capsule plan. Think of the time that might be saved if, instead of sitting down to a course dinner, one might simply take out a case of assorted capsules and the question of dinner would be settled in a few moments at most. To busy people this would be an inestimable boon."

"But if you did away with dinner and luncheon giving, you would take away one of our most delightful forms of entertaining."

"I think myself," said Mr. Dobley, "that capsule dinners would be in every way more desirable than the usual thing. Then think of the novelty. It would be entirely original, and everybody is crying out for novelty nowadays. *Fancy* how much it would please a party of

guests to be seated around a table upon which sparkling glass dishes of capsules in different colors would be distributed instead of heavy roasts, gravies, and vegetables? Think of the rainbow effects that might be produced by mingling the shades artistically."

"I have never seen any food capsules," said Mrs. Dobley, "but I didn't imagine that they were in colors."

"They are not at present," said Mr. Dobley, "but Freshington and I propose to manufacture a capsule that will be produced in all the most exquisite and newest shades. We agree that the sort of people who would go in for the capsule fad would be of dainty tastes. Therefore we shall appeal to the eye by having the entire dinner constitute an admirable color scheme, as well as an excellent repast. For instance, we should have the soup in Nile green—oval and globular. One capsule would constitute a plate of soup."

"It would seem like gulping one's soup to take it in that way."

"On the contrary, my dear," said Mr. Dobley, "the new way of dining would do away with every disagreeable feature of table etiquette. No one could attempt to eat with a knife, for no one would think of slicing a capsule. No one could spill soup, or tip up the plate, or eat toward him,

or do other forbidden things, if he had only a capsule to handle. Soup, you know, is one of the most ungraceful foods in the list."

"How about olives and salted almonds, and things of that sort?" asked Mrs. Dobley. "I am very fond of peanut sandwiches also. Surely you wouldn't have those in the capsule form?"

"We should have those frivolous foods all in a small sugar-coated morsel that could be carried in a small box in the vest pocket or in a bonbonnière. We have a delightful idea for the fish. We have a newly invented phosphorescent coating that will cause the fish capsule to glow brightly, like jewels. The different tintings will indicate the different fish. They will be actually tempting, and you see the great advantage? There will be no bones. At last we shall be able to enjoy that noble fish, the shad, without feeling that an accident policy insurance is necessary as an accompaniment. The fish capsules will be perfectly round; but when you come to the desserts, we shall have heart shapes, Greek crosses, flowers of all sorts, and all in different colors."

"It will really be a very pretty plan," said Mrs. Dobley thoughtfully; "but won't it seem like a foodless dinner—something like those table *d'hôtes* of Mr. Freshington's, where, when one

is finished, it is considered proper to begin all over again?"

"Before we put the capsule dinners in progress we shall educate ourselves away from the actual food idea. That is what the culinary kindergarten is for. First we shall eradicate the luncheon. When this is done, we shall become aware of the benefits resulting, and then Mr. Freshington, Mr. Van Ripper, one other man, and my self propose to constitute ourselves a quartet, which we shall call the Foodless Four. We shall introduce the capsules by living on them exclusively, keeping in strict training and inviting leading physicians to report on the superior conditions that will result. Of course, this will make a great stir throughout the entire country. It will advertise our capsules and induce people to buy them. Dyspeptics will simply be overjoyed at the prospect of being able to go without food in its injurious forms. To-day nothing wakens as much interest as the record of some man who has fasted for a number of days and has grown used to living without food. We shall do more than live with the new food capsule diet; we shall flourish and become athletic, and, intellectually, we hope for marvellous results."

"I think you will be generally regarded as cranks," said Mrs. Dobley. "Vegetarians have

a great many sensible arguments in favor of their abstinence from flesh, but still they rank as faddists."

"We don't propose to hurl our idea at people," said Mr. Dobley. "We shall let it sink in gradually. We shall first take up the question of our present system of too abundant ménus. A dinner of seven courses, followed by a dessert, is really a barbaric custom. When we get this truth thoroughly absorbed, we shall give our individual opinions the light. There will be much discussion and debate; we shall have at first chafing-dish demonstrations to prove the superiority of delicate methods of preparing delicate foods."

"These experiments will be non-explosive, I trust," said Mrs. Dobley, who remembered one of Mr. Dobley's attempts to prepare a Welsh rarebit with naphtha instead of alcohol.

"By the time we have reformed our members from the frying-pan and roasting systems to the more idyllic chafing-dish plan, they will begin to appreciate the idea that we shall strive to promulgate in the kindergarten—that food is not a necessity, and that our present system of ponderous ménus is all wrong. Naturally some of us will remain unconverted; some will reach the chafing-dish stage; some will improve only to the non-

luncheon condition, but there will be a steady advance in the right direction."

"Will you take up any other subjects?" asked Mrs. Dobley with interest.

"We think, Mr. Freshington and I," said Mr. Dobley, "that the capsule era will witness the solving of the servant question. When capsules are used as food, there will be no need of cooks; in fact, it will simplify the entire domestic system. The matter of serving a dinner will be easy. It will only be a case of opening one of our company dinner caskets containing as many of the pellets as desired. There will be an assortment of caskets for special occasions, like weddings, teas, and picnics."

"I should think they would be lovely for picnics," said Mrs. Dobley; "so easy to carry around. But, then, not half so much fun—do you think so?"

"Those who like the trouble of packing and unpacking hampers and dodging beetles and things while enjoying a lunch in the country can continue in the old lines," said Mr. Dobley, "but we feel that all will eventually be won over to the new plan. We have a charming little wedding-cake capsule—pure white, frosted, and wrapped in a bit of lace paper. It's a perfect dream!"

"It doesn't seem as poetic as the other sort," said Mrs. Dobley. "Just think of the wedding guests going home with capsules to dream on instead of cake!"

"When you see the style of the wedding-cake capsule, you will think it much prettier than the old-fashioned thing," said Mr. Dobley confidently. "Then we have a free-lunch capsule that we expect will sell rapidly. There are magnificent possibilities in the idea, Mrs. Dobley, that you will gradually become aware of when the culinary kindergarten becomes an established fact. In the mean time——"

"In the mean time," said Mrs. Dobley, "I've grown so hungry hearing you talk about it that I think you had better take me out to a real food dinner."

THE STORY OF THE PICNIC

"It will be charming!" said Mrs. Dobley. "Just an old-fashioned picnic in the woods, with lunch on wooden plates, with paper napkins, and no knives and forks!"

"It will be a dream of Arcady!" said Dobley.

"Every one has accepted, and that makes the party just sixteen. We are to meet at noon at Doquin's, that quaint French restaurant in Johnsbridge. I was there last just four years ago. It is right on the Bronx——"

"The beautiful Bronx!" corrected Mr. Dobley; "famous for its pellucid, placid—especially placid—waters. When do we go on this malarial-breeding trip?"

"On next Saturday," said Mrs. Dobley. "We have all agreed to wear shirt waists and short skirts."

"Then I won't go," said Dobley. "I should feel ridiculous in such a rig."

"Of course, I mean the women," said Mrs. Dobley. "We decided it would be too silly to dress up. The men are to wear knickerbockers. We shall feel like boys and girls again. How I

long to see that quaint old man that used to serve dinner under the rose arbor."

"Do you know that it strikes me that quaint old man has opened a quaint old dairy kitchen on the Bowery and sold out his rose arbor?"

"Well, the place must be there, at all events," said Mrs. Dobley. "I recollect it was called 'The Cherries.' Don't you remember, he called it that on account of the trees? He said it was the shadiest resort on the Bronx. And during the cherry season he always served cherry pie and cherry tarts for dessert."

"Does he know that he is to have a grown-up picnic on his hands?" asked Mr. Dobley.

"Oh, yes; I telegraphed him to have dinner ready for sixteen at seven o'clock. I signed it J. Dobley."

"I thought we were going to eat on wooden plates and have paper napkins in the woods," said Mr. Dobley.

"That's only luncheon," explained Mrs. Dobley. "We thought it would be lovely to spend the first hour or two gathering wild flowers. Then we shall swing hammocks in some shady nook, and spread the luncheon on a rock. After that we shall enjoy a walk along the banks of the river——"

"The picturesque Bronx!" put in Mr. Dobley.

"Then back to The Cherries for dinner; after which we shall return in the gloaming, tired and happy."

"We're bound to be tired; but I am not so sure that we shall be happy. Picnics are uncertain."

"Let us not anticipate anything but a delightful time," said Mrs. Dobley. "I predict an absolutely perfect day!"

The morning dawned serene and cloudless, and the Dobleys made an early start. They reached Johnsbridge about noon, and asked a hackman to drive them to The Cherries.

"The which?" said the man.

"The Cherries," said Mrs. Dobley; "a restaurant."

"There's seven Cherry places here," said the man. "There's Cherry Inn, Cherry Cottage, Cherry Rest, Cherry-Tree House, Cherry Villa, Cherry Grove, and Cherry Gate."

"Why are they all named alike?" asked Mrs. Dobley. "A few years ago there was only one place of the name."

"Well, it's like this," said the driver. "That man made so much money that he grew rich and sold out, and the six men who wanted to buy the place, but were outbid, all opened places and called them Cherry. Now folks come up here looking for the old place, and they can't tell

which is which. It keeps trade evenly distributed."

"It will keep our picnic distributed also," said Dobley. "We'll have to get search-warrants to find them."

"I wonder who got my telegram?" said Mrs. Dobley thoughtfully.

"That's funny," said the driver. "Did you send that telegram? The agent put it up in the railroad station, and each one of the hotel proprietors claimed it was his, and the operator couldn't decide what to do. So they all agreed to have him read the contents to them and then each man said it was for him. I believe they have all made preparations for dinner to-night for a party from the city."

"Oh, dear me," said Mrs. Dobley, "how very embarrassing!"

"In a crisis like this one must be calm," said Mr. Dobley. "First we must pretend that we know nothing about the telegram. For the time being we are the MacWaddles of Westchester. We don't even know the Dobleys. We are just taking a little drive through the country. In this way we can collect our party and escape."

They drove along the road, coming at last to a small inclosure under an awning, where bicyclists sat around at small tables.

"This," said the driver, "is Cherry Rest."

"And there are the Van Rippers," said Mrs. Dobley. "We'll get out and let them know about the fix we are in."

The proprietor of Cherry Rest came out, rubbing his hands in anticipation.

"Do you belong to the picnic party?" he asked. "We have erected a temporary tent in the rear for the dinner."

"Hello, Dobley!" said Van Ripper. "I thought you were never coming."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Dobley; "but you have made a mistake. My name is MacWaddle. This is Mrs. MacWaddle."

Mrs. Dobley winked violently at Mrs. Van Ripper, while Van Ripper looked astonished.

"I thought we were going to meet here?" he said.

"Curious case of mistaken identity," said Dobley. "May I ask your name?"

"Oh, say," began Van Ripper, "this is carrying a joke——"

"This is no joke," said Dobley. It is a very serious matter. If you will walk along the road with me, while the lady who is with you occupies the carriage with Mrs. MacWaddle, I will make you understand that you owe me an apology."

Thus the party left Cherry Rest and Dobley explained the situation to Van Ripper, who agreed that it would be dangerous to admit the authorship of the despatch ordering dinner.

"I was undecided which of the seven places we should stop at," said Van Ripper, until we heard that the Cherry-Rest dinner was to be served in a tent. We thought that was rather a novel plan, and so we waited there."

"But we must stop at each of the other places in order to get the party together," said Mrs. Dobley. "I shouldn't want to lose any of them. What is this place all decorated with flags and banners?"

"That is Cherry Grove," said the driver. "They have made very elaborate plans there, I believe. They have a clambake. They looked this man Dobley up and found he was good for it, so they spared no expense."

As the party neared Cherry Grove the sound of an orchestra was heard, and Mr. Freshington and two girls in red golf coats appeared on the piazza, waving their handkerchiefs.

"Don't notice them," said Dobley. "We'll have to get them away by strategy. Let the carriage proceed slowly and wait around the bend of the road."

Freshington came out to the gate to meet them.

"Dobley," he said, "you're a brick! You are a royal host. This man has made preparations on a great scale. He has had a bowling-alley put up and a May-pole and a shooting-gallery in the cellar. He said he'd have had links laid out if he had had time. Let me introduce the proprietor. Dobley, this is——"

"What name is that?" asked Dobley, stepping on Freshington's foot. "I have seen it on a tombstone in an old country churchyard."

"Surely you don't forget your old college chum MacWaddle," said Van Ripper, nudging Freshington.

Mr. Freshington gazed in astonishment at them just as the two girls came up, but before they had time to speak Van Ripper said:

"Mr. MacWaddle, ladies — MacWaddle of Westchester."

"About a quarter of a mile from here," said Dobley, "there is a most picturesque little dell absolutely grown with marguerites."

"How lovely!" said both girls at once.

"We might wander there," said Dobley, "and gather some——"

"To decorate the tables," said the girls. "That will be sweet!"

"Tables?" said Dobley in astonishment. "What tables?"

"Why, we are all going to a picnic," said one of the girls. "Aren't you invited?"

"No," said Dobley; "I know nothing about it. I merely stopped in passing, attracted by the decorations and the air of general rejoicing."

"Well, the clambake will be ready at six sharp," said the proprietor, "and if you meet this man Dobley, tell him he might as well come over and eat it, for he'll have to pay for it. I don't intend to have any one bunco me in that fashion."

"We will return," said Freshington, "anon."

The reinforced picnickers tramped down the road where Mrs. Dobley and Mrs. Van Ripper were waiting anxiously.

"I think it would be better if we were to break in detachments of two, while scouring the surrounding restaurants," suggested Dobley. "Freshington and I will go in as scouts and Van Ripper can remain here on guard."

"Cherry Gate is right up the road," said the driver. "It's a boarding-house."

Freshington and Dobley proceeded to the door of a neat little white house with green blinds. The door was opened by a thin-faced lady, who had a worried look.

"Do you belong to this fool picnic party?" she asked.

"We called to inquire the price of board," said Dobley. "Do you keep a dog?"

"Are there people called the Winkers stopping here?" asked Van Ripper. "Because if there are——"

"There are two young men waiting in the parlor for the last hour for a picnic party," said the thin-faced lady, "and we have made preparations for a large party, and somebody's got to pay for it."

"Those are the two Winker boys, I'll wager," said Van Ripper. "Madam, I regret to say that you have been the victim of two harmless lunatics, who have the delusion that they are giving and attending picnics. If you will allow me, I will go in and get them quietly away. This is their keeper. MacWaddle, have the straight-jacket ready in case they are violent."

The horrified woman allowed Van Ripper to go in and return with two young men, who wore bicycle suits and a bored look.

"Where's the picnic?" asked one of them as they came out, while the woman cowered against the wall.

"You hear that, madam?" said Dobley. "That is the way they talk constantly; life is one eternal picnic to them."

"Well, who is J. Dobley?" asked the woman.

"That's what I am going to find out. And when I do, I'll give him a piece of my mind."

"There's Dobley," said one of the youths. "This is a nice sort of a picnic!"

"Yes," said Dobley, "of course it is a nice picnic, and we are giving it in a grove of seventeen thousand trees, and it is costing us eight billion dollars, isn't it? This, madam, is the Khedive of Egypt and the Turkish Ambassador."

"Yes, the greatest living cigarette advertisement in the world," said Van Ripper. "They receive eighteen hundred billion dollars a year to travel around together."

"Will you come quietly," asked Dobley, "or shall we be obliged to use force?"

By this time the proprietress of Cherry Gate slammed the door suddenly and let a dog loose in the rear of the house, who came up just as Dobley scaled the fence.

"I can't stand this any longer," he said. "It's too much of a strain. Suppose we stand before the other places and whistle until the others of the party come out, if they are at any of them. That dog jarred me."

"They have two bloodhounds at Cherry Inn," said the driver, "and the owner has a terrible temper."

"I have an idea," said Van Ripper. "Let us

send two of the ladies to Cherry Inn and to Cherry Villa, and they can tactfully get any of the others away on some plea or other. Then the party will be nearly complete, and we can take to the woods."

"That is the brightest thought that has been uttered," said Dobley.

The feminine scouts came back triumphantly with two married couples who had been waiting patiently at Cherry Grove, where they said an extra corps of waiters had been hired for the picnic. They spoke eloquently about fried chicken and other inviting features of the bill of fare, while the hungry picnickers gnashed their teeth.

"Cherry Cottage and Cherry-Tree House yet to hear from," said Dobley. "Oh, this is such a pleasant picnic!"

"They are both close together," said the driver; "the grounds adjoin."

"I'll tell you what we had better do," said Dobley. "Let the driver take his wagon off and engage a large stage and a speedy pair of horses. This can wait for us nearby. When we acquire the rest of the party, we will all get in the stage and drive rapidly to the next village."

"Suppose some of the guests have come up since and are waiting at the other places where we have just been?" suggested Mrs. Dobley.

"They should have come earlier," said Dobley. "We are not to blame if they get into any trouble through their own delay. As for the clambake——"

"The clambake," said Freshington, "is one of the might-have-beens."

"But we have luncheon with us, so we won't quite starve," said Mrs. Van Ripper. "If we can only get a shady place."

"I see Mr. and Mrs. Biffkins and the Grassly girls waiting down under the trees back of the Cherry-Tree House," said Mrs, Dobley. "If we could only attract their attention!"

"I'll steal along by the back fence and get them over it while the proprietor is waiting on the front stoop for the picnic," said Dobley. "You can go quietly to the stage and wait there until we come up. Then we can whip up the horses and leave this place behind us."

"We shall probably be pursued," said Mrs. Dobley; "but it will be exciting at all events. Be sure you find the stage. You'll know us by the girls' red coats."

"In the mean time," said Dobley, taking a box from his pocket, "this is my contribution to the luncheon. I gathered them fresh this morning."

"What are they?" asked Mrs. Van Ripper. "Mushrooms?"

"No, caterpillars," said Dobley.

"Caterpillars!" exclaimed the ladies.

"Certainly," said Dobley; "it wouldn't be a real picnic if there weren't caterpillars in the lunch!"

PUNCH À LA RUSSE

"I THINK," said Mr. Dobley thoughtfully, "that the custom of seeing the old year out is a very charming one. It is typical of a parting, as with an old friend, for we cannot deny that whatever the old year has brought us, we at least know the extent of his kindness and unkindness. The new year, on the contrary, is an unknown quantity; and, while we rejoice at his coming, there must always be a certain misgiving mingled with our joy."

"But the very coming of the New Year signifies a hope for better things," said Mrs. Dobley. "We are always building Spanish castles with the materials which he is to pour into our laps."

"Which are sometimes likely to be gold bricks," said Mr. Dobley.

"And making resolutions," went on Mrs. Dobley.

"Which are only made to be broken," said Mr. Dobley. "If there is one person more objectionable and generally disagreeable to meet, it is the man with one of those new-born resolutions. He

goes about thrusting it in everybody's face while it is new, and making you realize what a magnificently strong-minded chap he is, and all the time you long to tell him that it will last him just a few days, and it will then form another block in the pavement of Hades."

"A much prettier custom," said Mrs. Dobley, "is one which I recollect we put in practice every New Year's Eve when I was a girl. Just as the clock was striking twelve we drank a toast to the New Year, and each one made a resolution—silently—without expressing the particular pet delinquency we intended to avoid in the future. I don't mean to say that we kept the resolutions any more than if they were the other sort that folks shout from the roof-tops, but it was more fun. But, then, everything is fun when one is a girl! When people settle down to the hopeless monotony of domestic existence, without one ray of sunshine——"

"Where do I come in?" asked Mr. Dobley. "I think that as a ray of sunshine I might be considered."

"Oh, you know what I mean!" sighed Mrs. Dobley. "There's such sameness. One day is like the other! Sometimes I positively wish, like Mr. Freshington, that I was a Bohemian and lived in a studio with a chafing-dish!"

"I think, Mrs. Dobley," said Mr. Dobley, "that in view of these somewhat alarming statements it would be a wise idea for us to arrange some little festivity for New Year's Eve. Not a pink tea or a musicale, but a sort of social watch meeting of friends, limiting the party, say, to a dozen. Let us see the old year out with a harmonious gathering of kindred souls assembled around a hospitable bowl of——"

"Eggnog?" suggested Mrs. Dobley. "In that beautiful silver bowl that the Uplate Club presented to you; that, I think, will be a charming idea!"

"All but the eggnog," said Mr. Dobley. "Eggnog is really commonplace and behind the times."

"But, then, we do know how to make it," said Mrs. Dobley, "and one has to consider that."

"There is a Russian punch," said Mr. Dobley, "the recipe for which is known only to a few persons in this country. It really is a state secret, and I have a translation of it in the safe at the office. It is said to be a most wonderful concoction."

"But you have never made it, have you?" asked Mrs. Dobley. "I shouldn't like to experiment with our guests."

"If you will leave it all to me, Mrs. Dobley,"

said her husband, "you can depend that everything will be all right. Have no misgivings whatever. I shall get out the recipe to-day, and will order home the ingredients. Then, if you will have them prepared in the proper fashion, I will myself mix the punch in the presence of our friends. That, you know, is the Russian custom. In that land of Nihilism there is always a hint of assassination in the air. Hence the custom of preparing the bowl in view of the guests."

"Well, I shall send out the cards," said Mrs. Dobley, "and shall leave the question of the punch entirely to you; but, remember, I wash my hands of all responsibility in the matter. I distinctly recollect a Welsh rarebit that you once made which resulted in an explosion which nearly set the house on fire!"

"Because of Mr. Freshington's thoughtlessness in handing me a bottle of naphtha instead of alcohol," said Mr. Dobley; "pray remember, my dear, that I was in no way to blame for his stupid mistake!"

Mr. Dobley brought the recipe home from the office that evening and read parts of it to his wife. He said that he was bound by a solemn promise not to let any eye rest on it but his own, and that he regarded a matter of the sort as sacred.

But the list of ingredients which he repeated

to his wife so alarmed her that she begged Mr. Dobley to give up the idea of the famous Russian bowl and to prepare some simpler and more familiar mixture. Mr. Dobley, however, was set upon this particular recipe, and explained to his wife that Russians were a nation of epicures, and as such were centuries ahead of America.

"We know absolutely nothing," he declared, "on the subject of champagnes or of cigars when we compare ourselves to the Russians. They are away in advance of every other country in these matters. That is why this recipe is so unique—so subtle and so eductive in its component parts. For instance, listen to this bit of history:

"'The foundation of the Russian punch is kvass—the national beverage. It is manufactured from ten pounds of rye flour, one pound of malt, and one pound of buckwheat flour stirred in a tub with three quarts of warm water. Over this mixture three quarts of boiling water is poured, and after half an hour six quarts of boiling water is added; this treatment being repeated at half-hourly intervals three times more. Stir the flour and the water well together; let it cool; cover and stand in a rather warm place. The following day you thin the kvass with cold water, put in a cool place, and let it thoroughly sour; then bottle.'"

"You don't mean that we have to do all that with that horrid mess?" asked Mrs. Dobley. "I never heard anything in my life that sounded quite so disagreeable. Oh, do please have something else. I am sure we should all prefer to have something simpler and less mysterious!"

"That is only one of the parts which we obtain direct from Russia, Mrs. Dobley," explained her husband. "Besides that, we have champagne, lemons, oranges, sugar, arrack, Jamaica rum, tea, Curaçoa, Rhine wine, brandy, seltzer, and Hippocras."

"Hippo—what?" said Mrs. Dobley. "I never heard of anything so queer in my life. It will surely make us all ill!"

"Is it possible, my dear, that you do not know what Hippocras is? Hippocras is a spiced wine of the mediæval age—that is, the original Hippocras was. The recipe of Talleyraut, the head cook of Charles VII., king of France, reads in this way:

"'A quart of wine, a third of an ounce of cinnamon, one-thirtieth of an ounce of ginger, twice as much of cloves, as much of nutmeg, six ounces of sugar and honey; grind the spices, put them in a muslin bag, hang this in the wine for ten or twelve hours, and filter several times.'"

"I hardly think, Mr. Dobley, that it is neces-

sary that we should go back to the middle ages for such a simple matter as a bowl of punch?"

"That is the original Hippocras. Nowadays it is made up of apples, sugar, peppers, lemon rind, cinnamon, peeled almonds, and Rhine wine. It is an admirable substitute for the ancient kind. You buy it bottled."

"It sounds to me as though everything would taste simply impossible. Couldn't you try a little first and see how it turns out? Then we might feel quite safe about going ahead with it?"

"If the recipe is followed carefully, it has to turn out all right, Mrs. Dobley. It simply can't turn out to be anything but a magnificent Russian punch, the methods of preparing which have been a guarded secret for many years. I shall send home the necessary things to-day and you may rest assured that the mixture will be a success. I flatter myself that I understand the subject of mixing drinks."

That afternoon a grocery wagon deposited a small cargo of bottles at the Dobley home. Some of them were weirdly shaped and covered with foreign inscriptions. Then there were odd-looking packages of sweets from other countries, and spices and fruits in plenty. The display was imposing, almost appalling in its quantity, and Mrs. Dobley once more allowed herself some pangs of

doubt as to the outcome of such a general mixture of unknown liquids.

With the coming of New Year's evening the Dobley dining-room had every appearance of an up-to-date bar. Bowls of ice and spices and fruit, bottles with corks drawn and undrawn, shakers, strainers, and mixers of all varieties were strewn about, and Mr. Dobley, smiling with a courage born of confidence in his friend's recommendation of the famous punch, set to work to concoct the bowl with all the grace of a professional bartender, while his guests observed him in a vain endeavor to conceal their doubts as to the outcome of the venture.

"Better leave the champagne and the things we know something about out until the last, and, if the thing doesn't mix up well, we can still make a punch with the others," was Freshington's suggestion; but it was met with scorn by Mr. Dobley.

"We Americans," he said, as he flipped some eggs and ice together in the bottom of the bowl, "shall never learn to be connoisseurs in the matter of cookery, or even such a simple matter as the mixing of a bowl of punch. We are still in the primer stage so far as our palates are concerned, and we show no signs of advancing."

"How perfectly hideous it seems," said Mrs.

Van Ripper to her husband in a stage whisper, "to mix lemons with eggs and ice?"

Mr. Dobley affected not to hear the remark, but stirred the mixture furiously. "Would you mind," he said to his wife, with studied politeness, "handing me the bowl containing the orange pulp and the bicarbonate of soda?"

A slightly suppressed groan and a shiver went through the guests. Mrs. Dobley hesitated, looking in a wild-eyed way at the greenish mixture disfiguring the bottom of the silver bowl.

"The bowl," went on Mr. Dobley, with an awful firmness of tone, "containing the orange pulp and the bicarbonate."

"They say," suggested Van Ripper, "that a dash of cream of tartar in a punch is one of the greatest kinds of improvements——"

"With a half teaspoonful of powdered borax it is simply immense," said Mr. Freshington.

"Then, too, I like a touch of cowless milk just as it comes to a boil."

Mr. Dobley carefully measured a gill of Curaçoa into the ingredients in the bowl, and they took on a pale greenish shade.

"When you take this punch," he said, "you will apologize to me for your tasteless remarks. That will be my triumph."

He took up a cup of powdered sugar and

dumped it magnificently into the bowl. "Now," he said, "the kvass!" He tilted one of the queer-shaped bottles into the bowl, and the mixture turned to a heavy brownish mass, through which the spoon moved with difficulty.

"Just a little carbonic," he said to Mrs. Dobley.

She noticed that a certain pallor had come over his face. He had lost his jaunty air of confidence.

"Carbolic!" said Mrs. Van Ripper with a shudder, while an indignant whisper went up from the other women guests, in which Mrs. Dobley took an audible part.

"Oh, say, old man," said Freshington, "that's just where we draw the line! What do you intend to do to us, anyhow?"

"I said carbonic!" said Dobley savagely between his teeth. "C-a-r-b-o-n-i-c—understand? I want to thin this mixture down before adding any of the champagne."

"It looks like scrambled eggs," said Van Ripper. "Count me out! I'll see the new year in without any of that horrible prescription!"

A chorus of approving murmurs followed the remark. Some one handed Mr. Dobley a siphon. With a vain attempt to appear easy and nonchalant, he directed a stream of the contents into the

middle of the mixture. With a low, hissing noise it began to effervesce and rise like an erupting Vesuvius to the edge of the bowl. It bubbled as though it were boiling, and made a mountain of foam, like the soapsuds in a tub.

"That's where we get some life in it!" said Dobley, with a nervous laugh. "Now open a bottle of wine for me, Freshington, like a good fellow. This will be ready in another minute."

"You don't get anything more to put in that bowl except over my dead body," said Freshington, constituting himself a guard over the sideboard, where the array of bottled liquids were placed. "If you want to go on having fun with that spoon, all right. It seems to amuse you, and it don't hurt us; but you won't mix any of these perishable goods with that crater that you have there. Will he, Mrs. Dobley?"

"It certainly isn't going to turn out right!" said Mrs. Dobley. "It acts just like yeast!"

"I shall make this Russian punch," said Dobley, "whether you drink it or not. I have set out to do it, and I don't believe in leaving a task half done, confessing failure, as it were, before I've half tried. The bottle of Hippocras, if you please."

The maid handed him another fearfully shaped and inscribed bottle, while an intense silence fell

over the group around the table. He turned the bottle dexterously over with one hand, when, with a sudden spurt and low gurgling sound, the entire mixture bubbled in a seething mass, and with a final spurt overflowed the holly-hung edge of the bowl, and foamed over the table like a miniature Niagara, leaving emptiness and ruin in its wake.

"Great Jumping——" began Dobley as he saw the work of his hands disappearing in a torrent of foam. "Who could expect it to act like that!"

"Cheer up, Dobley!" said Van Ripper, shaking hands fervently with his host. "It's all for the best. It might have happened later when you had used up everything in the house. Besides that, our uneducated American palates would never stand for that mixture. It looked something between a mustard plaster and a fly blister."

"Yes," said Freshington, "as a race of epicures, we may be deficient and far behind the Russians; but we draw the line at liquid volcanoes, with fireworks attachments."

"Those secret Russian things are dangerous to deal with, anyhow," said Dobley, wiping off the frothy lather that had leaped into his face. "I believe there was dynamite in it! The darned thing was loaded!"

"Yes," said Van Ripper; "just imagine if that scrambling process hadn't begun until we had imbibed the mixture. The glad New Year would have dawned to find us filled with some fearful Russian secret and dangerous higher explosives. Dobley, let this be an awful warning to you. If you want to try experiments of this sort, get a laboratory somewhere and work them out alone. We will never stand this didn't-know-it-was-loaded excuse again."

LUNCHEON AS A LURE

MRS. DOBLEY appeared unexpectedly at the office just as her husband was preparing to go out for luncheon.

"I knew I'd just catch you!" she exclaimed delightedly. "I just thought I'd enjoy surprising you. Besides, I'm so tired having luncheon home! Now I want you to take me to one of those funny places where you get all the queer things to eat."

"I suppose you mean a French restaurant?" said Mr. Dobley.

"Yes; where you can get snails and mussels and things they don't have at American places, and cook coffee at the table and make salad dressing. I think it's lots of fun!"

"All right," assented Mr. Dobley, never suspecting his wife's deep-laid plans. She knew that a luncheon such as she had briefly sketched was calculated to put Mr. Dobley in first-class humor, when she might suggest anything wild, from a music-hall matinée to a slumming trip in Chinatown. Dobley always walked into the trap blindly, although he had been worked in this way

many times before. But French luncheons, prepared as they were at Bignon's, put him in a reckless mood. There was something about their Bourguignonne sauce that intoxicated him, he always said. So they secured a pleasant table by a window, from which they could see the afternoon throng on the avenue, and Mrs. Dobley ordered luncheon.

"It's such a lovely day," said Mrs. Dobley, nibbling at a caviar sandwich, "that it seems a shame for you to go back to the old office. Suppose you telephone them you won't be back today?"

"And what do you propose?" said Mr. Dobley, as he delicately extracted a snail from its shell. His accents suggested an amiability that would consider the purchase of a steam yacht or a trip to Europe.

"Oh, we'll think of something!" said Mrs. Dobley, passing him a dish of stuffed olives, of which she knew he was particularly fond. "Aren't you going to smoke, dear?"

It was an understood thing that, when the Dobleys lunched at Bignon's, Dobley was to smoke cigarettes all through the repast. Mrs. Dobley said it made her feel as if she weren't married.

"How is it," asked Mr. Dobley, "that we can't

have cooks who know how to give this delicate flavor to a soup?"

"We never can until we live in Paris," said Mrs. Dobley. "We shall some day. We shall go to Paris and take an apartment and live just as they did in 'Trilby.'"

"But until then," said Dobley, "must we continue this humdrum existence here in New York?"

"Do you know what I think would be great fun," suggested Mrs. Dobley, insisting on the smaller half of the cold losbter, as she knew Mr. Dobley particularly favored it with Tartare sauce. "The next thing to Paris in New York is——"

"What, my dear?" asked Mr. Dobley, with some alarm.

"The French shops on Fifth Avenue!" said Mrs. Dobley, sipping an absinthe with the air of an habitué.

"Oh," said Mr. Dobley, "I've never heard of them!"

"No," said Mrs. Dobley regretfully, "because you only see the bills from the big department stores where I have to trade, and where any one can go and buy the same thing——"

"Who has the price," put in Mr. Dobley.

"But I never feel that I can quite afford to buy at the French shops, for, of course, everything is

imported and hand-made and high-priced! But, oh, they have the loveliest——" here Mrs. Dobley leaned across the table and whispered confidentially to her husband. "You simply can't get them anywhere else! And you go around in those little shops and see the things, and you can quite imagine that you are in Paris. Mrs. Van Ripper got a lot of things, and she showed them to me yesterday when I called. Some beautiful——" Mrs. Dobley whispered once more.

"Really?" said Mrs. Dobley.

"Yes—polka-dotted—all silk. You can't get them except in one shop. I tell you what we might do. We might go around and look at some of the things. We need not buy any unless we want to. There are a few little things I must get—have you any money with you?"

"Some," said Mr. Dobley; "but I have my check-book anyway."

"Oh, that will be perfectly lovely!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley radiantly. "First we'll go to Mme. Fittem's. I want you to help me select a pair of those new French corsets. I can't make up my mind which pattern to take."

"Will it be quite right for me to go along?" suggested Mr. Dobley. "Couldn't I wait outside and have them sent out—samples, you know?"

"Oh, plenty of men go in there!" said Mrs.

Dobley. "Besides, it's the Frenchiest of all the French shops. I wouldn't have you miss it for the world."

Mr. Dobley paid the bill, and complimented the waiter on the excellence of everything. Then he and Mrs. Dobley went out to a hansom cab looking so gay that a bald-headed man by the window said: "These pretty typewriters have the most luxurious luncheons of any people in New York!"

The corset-shop was a bewildering place to visit. It was dim and perfumy, and filled with fascinating wax ladies in startling negligee, with small waists and a noticeable lack of limb. But Mr. Dobley, fortified by his French luncheon, entered almost blithely. The saleswomen looked after him admiringly. They were accustomed to men who sneaked in sheepishly to make purchases without looking around. Mme. Fittem greeted Mrs. Dobley like an old friend.

"I want to see some of those new Paris girdles," said the latter. "I want to order some, but I can't quite decide on the pattern."

"Do you mean the eighteen-dollar ones?" asked Mme. Fittem.

"The black brocade, with violets and pansies and rosebuds. Which do you think I ought to have, Mr. Dobley?"

"Violets or pansies—let me see," said Mr. Dobley. "This is rather nice, don't you think so?"

He was gazing admiringly at a beautiful wax brunette clasped in a gorgeous lacy creation and ending in a ruffle and a marble pedestal like a mermaid from a marble yard.

"Those have the real lace edge and solid gold clasps," said Mme. Fittem. "They are really one of the finest pairs ever made!"

"Oh, I am sure they are too expensive," said Mrs. Dobley. "These simple eighteen-dollar ones are all I can afford!"

Mr. Dobley gazed at the pansy brocades with a scorn bred of French cookery. "Those look positively mean beside these," he said decisively.

"But these are really too fine for ordinary use," said Mrs. Dobley.

"Why not have both?" said Mr. Dobley, as though the idea had suddenly occurred to him—as indeed it had. "How much are these?" He indicated the brunette mermaid.

"A pair to order like those would be sixty dollars," said Mme. Fittem.

"They are beautiful," said Mrs. Dobley.

"Both pair," said Mr. Dobley, taking out his pocketbook.

"And a box of assorted silk lacings," said Mrs. Dobley, with a cheerful smile. "Good morning, Mme. Fittem, good morning."

As the Dobleys made their exit, the expression of the saleswomen had changed from mere admiration to hero worship. Mrs. Dobley rustled her skirts ostentatiously, something as a hen clucks its pride in its chickens. She felt prouder of Mr. Dobley at that moment than if she had been presented with a medal. "And now," she said, "to the hosiery shop?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Dobley, with his most debonair manner. "Do you know, I can never imagine why some men object to go shopping with their wives? I would rather select hosiery than play poker any time. Do you have to try 'em on? Don't mind me, you know. After that corset place, I can go through anything!"

"Oh, certainly not!" said Mrs. Dobley. "They only have samples on those wooden——"

"Limbs?" suggested Mr. Dobley.

"Blocks—I was going to say," said Mrs. Dobley, "and you order a dozen of this kind or a dozen of that."

"Oh, I see!" said Mr. Dobley. "You don't get 'em by the crate or the keg?"

"Here it is," said Mrs. Dobley. "You see those dark blue with small white dots? Those are

like Mrs. Van Ripper's—only three dollars a pair. I am going to have some of those."

"And those black ventilated kind?" said Mr. Dobley, "they look rather giddy?"

"Those are open work," explained Mrs. Dobley. "Those are five dollars a pair!"

"That's nothing," said Mr. Dobley. "We must keep above the Van Ripper standards."

"And they have gloves here too!" said Mrs. Dobley; "the real French glove, just the sort you get at the—the Moulin Rouge—I think it is called——"

"You mean the Jardin Mabille?" corrected Mr. Dobley.

"No—the Palais Royale—that's it! Exactly the same gloves. We must get some of those!"

Mr. Dobley insisted on adding to these purchases a box of embroidered handkerchiefs and a dressing coat, with lace butterflies inserted over its surface. A blonde saleswoman with blue eyes insisted that it was just off the French steamer, and Mr. Dobley wanted two, but there was only one in the shop.

"Those French shops are positively the most charming places I have ever been in!" he said enthusiastically. "They seem so appreciative when people buy a few little things. Haven't you a few more on the list? The next time I go

out to get you a present you won't catch me going to stores where they have grinning dudes for salespeople."

"Oh, you couldn't exactly go alone," said Mrs. Dobley in some alarm. She realized that Mr. Dobley would be the most popular man in New York with the proprietors and saleswomen of the shops they had just visited.

"Why not?" said Mr. Dobley.

"Oh, it wouldn't look just right!" said Mrs. Dobley. "You couldn't very well select things yourself, could you?"

"Oh, I don't know!" said Mr. Dobley. "After to-day's tour, I feel that I could select outfits for female seminaries. I know all about the plain-ribbed and the silk and lisle mixed. I am an authority on the sudden-hipped model and the long-waisted medium. You couldn't palm off any plain plated hooks on me, and I know that baby ribbon is not exclusively for infants' wear. I don't see why you should bother about shopping any more, Mrs. Dobley. I will relieve you of that annoying detail. Why, those saleswomen are too obliging for anything. Take that Titian-haired peach——"

"What?" said Mrs. Dobley.

"That demure-looking blonde girl in the glove store," said Mr. Dobley. "She seemed to me to

have a beautiful disposition—so kindly—and—where is the next place you wished to stop, my dear?"

"I don't think we will stop at any more places to-day," said Mrs. Dobley carelessly, "except, perhaps, the florist's. I want a large bunch of selected double violets, such as you used to send me when we were engaged, and you might let him fix you up a buttonhole bouquet of some sort."

"And then," said Mr. Dobley, "where do we go? I am just beginning to get in the spirit of this thing. Suppose we go——"

"Home," said Mrs. Dobley, with some decision. "Dinner will be about ready by that time, and the Van Rippers are coming. But we have had a lovely time, haven't we?"

"Lovely!" said Mr. Dobley emphatically. "I'm going to take Van Ripper to-morrow."

DOBLEY'S PLAN FOR A SALON

MR. DOBLEY was very late for dinner. He came in with an air of jubilant enthusiasm which indicated a new train of thought.

"The fact is, Mrs. Dobley," he explained, "Freshington has been unfolding a magnificent business proposition to me."

"Something preposterous, I presume?" sighed Mrs. Dobley.

"It's such an excellent idea," said Mr. Dobley, lowering his voice impressively and looking about as though he feared the cook was listening at the door, "that I shall ask you not to mention it until we have perfected our plans and are ready to spring the thing on society."

"Society!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley in amazement.

"Exactly. Society is the fish that is to nibble at our bait and return us a catch in golden coin."

"Is it a new winter resort or an improved automobile?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Neither," said Mr. Dobley in triumph. "You would never guess, Mrs. Dobley. It is a salon."

"A salon?"

"Precisely a ready-made, permanent salon."

"I recollect that you were once interested in an idea that included the establishment of a permanent circus, but a ready-made salon sounds rather vague to me."

"I will explain, Mrs. Dobley. You have, of course, noticed the growing fondness for literary lions, private theatricals, and fashionable readings? Coupled with this there is a fad for slumming, for downtown dinners served in basements and on roofs; in fact, for any sort of amusement that is different from the old-established ideas."

"There certainly is a broader idea of entertainment than there used to be when I was a girl," admitted Mrs. Dobley. "And it is not half so stupid as it was then."

"It all indicates," said Mr. Dobley, "a desire on the part of society to elevate itself. Society is tired of itself. It is blasé to the very tips of its fingers."

"Really?" began Mrs. Dobley. "I can't——"

"A wave of art and literature," continued Dobley, "has struck the social ship and threatens to upset it. There are to be disintegrations, disruptions. New sets will form. A salon will arise from the ruin of the old. Culture, brains, and blood will be the standards instead of cash."

"Do you and Mr. Freshington propose to furnish the standards?" inquired Mrs. Dobley.

"When I speak of the ideal salon," said Mr. Dobley, who, it was plain to be seen, was quoting Freshington, "I am looking into the future. But there will be a formative period, a social upheaval, the low rumblings of which are already heard. Just now society is crying for a salon as children cry for the moon. Freshington and I propose to give society its salon—for a consideration!"

"Don't you think most people would want to own their own salons?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Yes, but they can't get 'em. When the salon becomes a fact, society will stand at the door trying to get in. Admission tickets cannot be bought on the sidewalk. Society will be up a tree."

"I see," said Mrs. Dobley.

"The present idea of people opening their arms to art and literature and saying, 'Come in, we will feed you, and feast you, and let you walk over our hardwood floors, and eat off our golden plates, if in return you will do a few stunts and be brilliant!' is going to result in a fearful mix-up. I tell you, Mrs. Dobley, there will be an increase in crime just as soon as this thing they call a salon begins, if it is allowed to go on as planned."

"You alarm me!" said Mrs. Dobley.

"How can it be avoided?" asked Mr. Dobley. "Society will begin its salon on one actor and an artist or two who have gone wrong and drifted into the pink-tea habit. The next thing will be to secure more victims. I can assure you, Mrs. Dobley, that several of these would-be salon owners have agents out at present scouring Chinatown and the Italian tables-d'hôte in search of art material. What will be the result? Poets with large, hungry families in Harlem flats will be brought within view of alluring feasts, gorgeous silverware, gems, and all sorts of temptation. Artists accustomed to freezing in their steam-heated studios will find themselves in the superheated atmosphere of Fifth Avenue. Intellectual giants who are used to quaffing nothing more intoxicating than Wurzburger will have the cup of pleasure held to their lips. Will they refuse?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mrs. Dobley.

"They will not! They will not only take what is offered, but they will reach out for more. The anarchistic spirit that is alive in every soul that has ever breathed the atmosphere of art will blaze like a bomb and ignite things."

"I suppose they are well insured," said Mrs. Dobley, as though to avert a catastrophe.

"Here is another thing, Mrs. Dobley. You know that if there is one fad, if we can call it a fad, more deeply rooted in those possessing the true artistic temperament than any other, it is the securing of souvenirs from the homes of their hosts."

"Well, I recollect that when we gave that dinner to the Purple Cat Club there were eight coffee-spoons, a pepper-mill, and three table-napkins missing. But, then, you explained it."

"Yes, I told you it was a purely playful idiosyncrasy. I made you understand that in the world of art the possession of property is regarded as only accidental. Another thing, the securing of souvenirs has a certain sentiment about it."

"Yes; the only trouble is that it breaks a set if three table-napkins are taken, or spoons. It is so hard to match patterns."

"But when you understand that it is an established custom you feel reconciled. Why, there's Glob Sepia, the artist. You recollect Mr. Sepia?"

"Yes; he took a salt-shaker and a punch-ladle the night of the dinner."

"Well, Sepia has his studio entirely furnished with souvenirs. It is really a remarkable place. Every piece of silverware has a history. As for the table linen and the towels, why, each one has a different marking on it. He has towels from

every hotel in the United States. And bric-à-brac, and even furniture—why, the place is a museum. People understand Sepia, so that even when he takes up a chair or an oil painting they pretend not to notice it. Sepia gets offended so easily!"

"Yes; I thought he was very sensitive. He was taking one of those game-carvers, and I told him he might as well take the other, so that he would have the set, and he threw it back on the sideboard. He seemed very much hurt."

"You see, you didn't understand him. Now the question is, Will society understand this phase of art? If at a salon some celebrity carelessly pockets a gold bonbon dish, or a salt-cellar, will the woman who is running the salon be gracious enough to smile pleasantly and go on as though nothing had happened?"

"I don't think she would understand," said Mrs. Dobley. "I shouldn't care to."

"That's just what Freshington and I thought. Now, our idea is to take the entire burden of the salon off the shoulders of those who are anxious to have one. At present they seem to think they can buy them as they would an automobile. They can't, and when they discover it there will be lots of disappointment. This is where Freshington and I are to come in with our circulars."

"Circulars?"

"Of course. We are going to get them out on the very heaviest cream-laid paper, with a crest and a monogram on the top. Freshington thought a bottle of Chianti rampant, with a salted almond couchant, would be a delicately symbolic idea. Then we are going to have them engraved something in this way."

Mr. Dobley took out a sheet of note-paper elaborately inscribed with lead pencil.

"This really is Freshington's idea," he said, "and I think you will admit that it is a good one. It brings the matter clearly before the reader without any beating about the bush." Then Mr. Dobley read this circular:

"We beg to call your attention to our newly established and magnificently equipped salon, which may be procured for evening parties, afternoon teas, house parties, and all occasions for which the services of a salon would be desirable. Realizing the difficulties and dangers which interfere with the establishment of a first-class salon, the undersigned have, at great expense, secured the best living specimens of subjects for salon use. Artists in every branch of art, conversationalists who talk only in epigram, musicians on every known instrument, travellers from the poles to the tropics, all prepared to furnish an

unconventional evening's entertainment and to pose as guests; the business side of the engagement to be strictly private.

"We are pleased to be able to inform our patrons that the services of detectives will be unnecessary, as we have investigated the references of all those whose time we have contracted for. Our own agent will accompany the salon and will arrange for the performances, which will be found strictly up to the mark. There will be absolutely nothing to offend the most prudish—unless it is required. For smokers, stag parties, etc., we have an entirely different staff of artists, who will give a more pronouncedly Bohemian programme. Our terms are strictly in advance, and may be ascertained on interview, varying with the time required. No engagements are made for less than two hours, or without supper, dinner, or luncheon furnished. We cannot agree to be responsible for any breakage or damage to furniture which may result from the enthusiasm or feeling displayed by our artists in their various rôles.

"Below will be found a few of our most desirable salon stars: Mr. Goldbricque Stringem, theosophist, said to be a Yogi; talks incessantly and will give hypnotic experiments if encouraged; good dresser. Mr. Centre Stage, actor; mag-

nificent wardrobe; fine figure; small eater; favorite as a corner man; can also dance. Prof. Pomegranate Pounden, pianist; like Paderewski in everything but looks; will do four turns in an evening; no encores; objects to wearing a dress suit. Miss Maizie Peach, neat and refined cake walk; can also skirt dance; will not black up. Mr. Chincey Chippywise, actor and recitationist; willing and obliging; Mr. Chippywise cannot only entertain with his inimitable songs and dances, but will be found invaluable to keep the help quiet during the progress of the salon. Tommy Tump, wit and mirth producer; handsome; wears a bracelet; for spontaneous wit and harmless repartee we can recommend Mr. Tump. Mrs. J. Racy Rocket, poet; will recite, whistle, tell stories, and do tricks with cards.

"These are only a few of our salon attractions. We have minor poets, comedians, and a large stock of foreign noblemen who will circulate among the guests and talk about their titles. In case of any inconvenient rush in serving the guests, these gentlemen have agreed also to act as waiters. Positively no tips.

"We aim to please. Give us a trial and you will use no other salon. We are constantly adding fresh material, and from time to time—if not oftener—we will announce new attractions, even

more varied and brilliant than these given herewith. Address The Smart Salon Supply Company, Hyphen Hotel Court. Cable address, Yelbod."

"There, Mrs. D.," said Dobley, folding up the paper and holding his eyeglasses triumphantly aloft. "Wha' d'you think of that?"

SLUMMING UP TO DATE

"OH, dear me!" said Mrs. Dobley, yawning.

When Mrs. Dobley said "Oh, dear me!" and yawned, Dobley knew that his wife wanted him to propose going somewhere. He was afraid she would ask him to take her to the French Ball; so he pretended not to hear, and went on reading an editorial in an evening extra on "The Baby's First Tooth," a subject in which he was not at all interested.

"I'm just dying for a novel experience of some sort," said Mrs. Dobley, "and I am at my wit's end to think of something. Can't you suggest——"

"Funny thing," said Dobley, in a rude, absent-minded way. "Just listen to this, my dear." He began to read: "'There may be subjects of more importance than the baby's tooth. But not to the baby. If you will notice the added tenderness in a baby's smile after it is able to flash its first tooth, you will find yourself beginning to think. It is a good thing to think. But it is a better thing to be able to draw a salary for writing things without thinking.'"

"Is that a 'Cosey Corner' joke," asked Mrs. Dobley, with scorn, "or is it a 'Helpful Hint'?"

"It's great stuff!" said Mr. Dobley, delighted with the idea that he had switched Mrs. Dobley's thoughts in another channel. "As he says, it makes you think."

"Well, think hard," said Mrs. Dobley, "and decide on something we can do to vary the monotony of existence."

Dobley's jaw dropped noticeably and his brow grew furrowed. He knew by the way in which Mrs. Dobley spoke that he was in for it.

"In what line?" he asked nervously. "The opera or the theatre, or——?"

"Oh, anything funny, or out of the common, or just a little disreputable!" said Mrs. Dobley. "I get tired being respectable!"

"I find it very exciting," said Mr. Dobley.

"Oh, yes; but you reformed when you were married. I never had a chance to sow an oat! Sometimes I wish I were a college boy and could go on a lark and smash windows and yell."

"My dear Mrs. Dobley, hadn't you better take a bromo to quiet your nerves? Such a state of mind is extremely regretable in a female——"

"Don't you dare to call me a female, Mr. Dobley; I simply won't have it!"

"In a feminine mind," went on Dobley, "that

is supposed to be like an æolian-harp, tuned to gentler melodies. These erratic tendencies which you display at times toward whooping things up, while attractive, perhaps, in the first flush of girlhood——"

"You always encouraged me in it," said Mrs. Dobley. "I recollect the night you proposed, you said that you first discovered that you loved me when you saw me turning a double somersault off a spring-board at Bar Harbor."

"One has to tell a girl some lie or other when he proposes," said Dobley. "I didn't tell you you were the only girl I had ever loved."

"No, you couldn't," said Mrs. Dobley, "for I knew better. You were engaged to that scraggy Hipkins girl for nearly a year."

"She was a gentle, domestic creature," said Dobley.

"Well, I am tired of being a mouse," said Mrs. Dobley, "and unless you think of something new I'll do something desperate. I'll go slumming with Cora Van Ripper!"

"Do women go slumming nowadays?"

"Well, we go on an afternoon's tour of the shops. It's the same thing."

"I suppose that is a very desperate experience."

"Well, you'd think so, if you tried on hats and coats and tailor gowns in about fourteen places

and had a biscuit and a cordial at each place. When Cora Van Ripper and I go on one of those trips, we always have to take a hansom home, and sometimes we forget where we live. Last time Cora told the man to drive to a number on Fifth Avenue, and when we got there, it was the reservoir."

"That reminds me," said Dobley. "I have heard of a new place to go slumming."

"Oh, how perfectly lovely!" said Mrs. Dobley. "Tell me about it?"

"Why, you make up a party," said Mr. Dobley, "and you go in cabs——"

"Oh, it's more fun to go in cars when you go slumming."

"But it is more sporty to go in cabs," said Dobley, "and then you are sure of getting home. The dinner is dreadful, and the music is dreadful; but it's the real thing. Every one goes, and you have to engage your table weeks in advance. Then you take a detective——"

"Is it so bad as that?" said Mrs. Dobley delightedly. "What do you have to take him for?"

"I've never been able to tell why you take him, but it's the proper caper. You see, it's in a cellar—a dinner in a cellar—and it's not safe to go in a cellar without a detective. But I understand the detectives are all upset about it."

"Their minds?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"No, their digestions! You put a detective on this dinner beat for about a week and he gets in a dream. You see they make him taste the dishes and detect what they are made of. It takes a sleuth to trace some of the food you get. The proprietors are Persians."

"Do they wear fezzes and turbans and things?"

"No, they wear satisfied smiles when they see the amount of coin they are raking out of the pockets of a gullible, fad-crazy public. You see, they have a system—a magnificent system! Freshington and I were talking the other day about opening a restaurant on the same plan. He thinks there's a fortune in it!"

"What do they do?"

"It's like this," said Dobley. "When you first get in, they give you a small glass of Persian knockout drops. After that you can't escape. It has hasheesh in it, and everything gets rose colored in a hurry."

"Like opium?" said Mrs. Dobley.

"Pipes," said Dobley, "are as nothing to the Persian knockout. You begin to think that life is a beautiful dream, and you feel grateful to the proprietors for allowing you to live. Then you go up and shake hands with them both and bring

them over and introduce them to your wife, and then you are presented to the leader of the band, and everything is on a nice social, easy, genial basis. It would be impolite to kick at anything after that, you see. Then the band plays."

"What do they play?"

"Now you've got me in a tight place," said Dobley. "It's supposed to be real Persian music, and there's no time or no tune to it. The wilder it is the more the people—under the spell of the hasheesh, you understand—applaud.

"In the mean time carriages are rolling up to the door and depositing their freight of feminine loveliness, escorted by masculine victims, at the threshold. It is the correct thing to wear all your best clothes, and to have a dashing, devil-may-care expression.

"Well, there's another shake-hands all round. The proprietors begin to perspire finding the tables that have been engaged, and the waiters get on a little jog-trot gait and a worried look that is supposed to indicate hard work. Just about then they bring you another hasheesh in a different-shaped glass. This blow kills father. You'll tell the story of your life then to any one who will listen to you. Then you go up and shake hands with the head of the firm and tell him he has the greatest place on earth. Then

the band plays, and you go up and offer the leader your watch."

"Don't you get anything to eat?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Well, you don't really want anything to eat by this time. You are having the time of your life. People you owe money to come up and ask about your health and tell you they've been coming here since the place was started. Then they tell you how it used to be in the old days. They ask you if you know the proprietor, and you forget that you've shook hands with him about seven times already, and you go up and do it all over again. About this time the waiter brings some frappéd brimstone and tells you that your dinner will be served presently. You tell him not to hurry himself, and give him a quarter. Then the band plays. The applause is deafening. The only people who look dogged and unmoved are the detectives escorting the slumming parties. They always seem tired, and they don't do any handshaking or any applauding."

"It must be simply too sweet for anything," said Mrs. Dobley. "But about the dinner?"

"Six months are supposed to have elapsed," said Dobley, "when the waiter brings up two ragged spikes of celery, which he places before from four to six people, and soup that tastes like

flour-paste. That is, it really tastes that way, but you talk about its exquisite flavor and wonder why it is that our American cooks cannot get up anything of the sort. You beckon to the proprietor, and when he gets through the crowd, you tell him that the soup is hot stuff, and that he's a man after your own heart. You ask him if he would mind having the band play, 'I'd Leave My Happy Home for You,' and he says he'll have it done with pleasure. You shake hands with him.

"By this time the excitement is at its height. The air is filled with cigarette smoke. Every one is laughing and talking, and when the band plays a song, you join in whether you know the words or not. It doesn't matter a particle, if you only make noise enough and keep things lively. You see your waiter and give him a dollar, and he brings more soup and some loggy claret-colored liquid in a wine bottle. Then he goes off and forgets you."

"Nothing but soup?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Oh, you don't mind a little thing like that! You see, no one goes there for the dinner. If any one speaks about getting anything to eat, you all tell each other that no one goes there for the dinner. It's a good thing you don't, for you don't get it. It's the sport you're there for, and

if you see any one you know—and you always see somebody you know—you smile in a reckless way, as though to say: 'You see I'm right here at the old stand! One of the boys! You can't beat me!' Then you go up and shake hands with him and present him to the proprietor and to the band. You whisper to the leader and ask him to play 'Hannah Lady,' and give him four twenty-five-cent cigars.

"In the mean time the waiter brings up some dishes, with sauce covering them, and, if you have a detective in the party, it's his turn to play. He guesses at it, and every one passes. Then the waiter gets angry with you and spills something on you, and you give him money to go away.

"By this time the band plays 'The Star-Spangled Banner' in ragtime. Every one sings all sorts of words, and you wave your handkerchief and give three cheers for the proprietor. Then you happen to see somebody drinking champagne, and it strikes you that this is the best idea that has occurred to you during the evening. You suggest it to your wife, and she says all right, but her voice sounds strange, and when you look around, you find you're talking to another lady.

"You see a man you've met somewhere, and you ask him who he is, and he tells you he's the proprietor. You tell him what a good fellow he

is, and ask him if he'll please lead you to your wife. By the time you find her you discover that the waiter in a fit of good-heartedness had brought not only coffee, but two cakes, with little seeds in them, two apples, a raisin, and four nuts. The band plays 'Yankee Doodle.' The patriotic feeling mounts to a perfect fervor. Everybody shakes hands with everybody else. You see some people going home, and you think how foolish they are to leave such a scene. Then the room begins to go round, and you suggest the idea that the entire party go out and walk around the block and come back. Every one agrees. You get your wraps and go out, and your cabmen seize you and push you forcibly into cabs while you protest vigorously that you only came out for a dash around the block just for fun."

"Well, what happens then?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Well, some people go uptown and get something to eat," said Dobley, "but it seems tame and uninteresting after the other place. But the funniest part of it is that all your enthusiasm is gone next day. You find the trip has cost you more than a week at a winter resort in a swell hotel, and you vow you'll never go again. That's the way I feel, but if you think you'd like to go, why, I'll make a sacrifice and——"

"Oh, I know something better than that," said Mrs. Dobley. "I've been waiting for you to finish to tell you that I had thought of it. There's a French ball on Monday night, and I'd just love——"

"My dear Mrs. Dobley, I cannot think of such a thing! Of all the stupid, commonplace affairs that ever happened——"

"The Van Rippers are going," said Mrs. Dobley, pouting. "Mr. Van has taken a box and, after the opera, they are all going round to see the fun. I told Mr. Van Ripper that I'd get you to go, but he said it was all such an old story to you that you'd see nothing in it. He said when a man reached your age he experienced a violent reaction in his ideas of amusement. I suppose that's true. You are awfully blasé, you know!"

"Van Ripper was going to French balls before I was born," said Mr. Dobley. "It amuses me to hear him when he talks in that way! He's as foolish about his age as though he were a girl! Why——"

"Suppose we go just to show him we're not so doddering as we look?" suggested Mrs. Dobley.

"When did you say it took place?" asked Dobley.

"Monday evening," said Mrs. Dobley.

"All right! That's a date!" said Dobley.

BOHEMIA TRANSPLANTED

THE Dobleys had taken a day off from the high-priced seaside hotel they had been stopping at and had enjoyed themselves in town so much that they were loath to go back. They had lunched at a Fifth-Avenue restaurant, taken an automobile drive up at Riverside Park; dined in the park, and then gone to a roof garden.

"It has simply been a perfect day," exclaimed Mrs. Dobley, as they went down-town in a cable car. "How I wish we had just stayed in town and taken little trips over Sunday! When I think of going back to that dreadful hotel and dressing three times a day and listening to that same old orchestra every night, well, I feel discouraged. Life in the city in summer-time is delightful."

"It's a grand, sweet song," said Dobley, "only people never seem to feel that way in June. Then folks are so busy getting away that they don't stop to eat."

"After this pleasant, unconventional day in a shirt waist and a linen skirt it seems like torture to return to the old routine of fancy work, piazza

gossip—and do you know, John, I think there's malaria out there?"

"Shouldn't be surprised," said her husband. "Never heard of a summer resort yet that wasn't accused of it. But cheer up, Honora. As the poet says, 'It's always morning somewhere!' We have got to hurry if we are going to catch that eleven-forty."

"It's all right for you to take it so coolly," said Mrs. Dobley. "You only have to come down twice a week. If you had to spend all your time there, as I have, with no chance to escape——"

"My dear, don't talk as though you were in the penitentiary. I think you are getting morbid. How would you like to go to the mountains for a while?"

"I don't want to go anywhere but home," almost sobbed Mrs. Dobley. "I'm sick and tired of hotels, and I think it's real mean of you to act so indifferent."

"By Jove! We've missed the train," said Dobley. "Nothing now until the twelve-ten, and that's an accommodation, confound it!"

"John," said Mrs. Dobley, "what's to prevent our going home to-night? I don't care if it is all shut up and full of camphor balls. It will be fun just to go and sort of camp out. It will seem lovely to see even the wallpaper again."

"Oh, my dear, you forget the way things are packed up. It would be out of the question for you to stop there."

"I don't see why. You stop there, don't you?"

"Yes, but that's different. I can put up with anything."

"Well, I'll put up with it, too. I've just taken a fancy to see the old rooms again. Do you know, the three months I've been away seems like a year?"

"I'll tell you what we'll do," suggested Dobley. "Let us go to the Hyphen House and get a suite of rooms and imagine we haven't a home."

"I'm tired of hotels," pouted Mrs. Dobley. "I want to go home."

"Well now, Honora, the fact is, my dear, you know young Freshington down at the office?"

"The fat man who tells you the funny stories?"

"Yes. Well, Freshington's folks are out of town, and he got sick of his boarding-house, and I—well, I gave him a key, and he's probably up there now."

"John Dobley! You gave him the key to our house and never told me?"

"I only did it to accommodate him, Honora.

He knew I was getting out of town, and the fact is, he asked me if I could put him up. I thought it would be a good idea to have him there. It's protection, you know."

"Well, I don't see why his being there should prevent me from going to my own home," said Mrs. Dobley severely. "I suppose he doesn't occupy every room in the house, does he?"

"Nonsense, my dear. He's slept in the guest-room some nights and sometimes in the dining-room. It depends how the breeze is."

"Sleeps in the dining-room! I never heard of such a thing. I'll stop his chasing any more breezes around that house. I shall say I've come home for good and wait there till he goes."

When the cab turned into the Dobley block, they saw quite a number of other cabs lined up before their door, and when they drove up Mrs. Dobley gasped for breath while Dobley's eyes protruded from his head. The house was illuminated from garret to dining-room, and the sound of music floated out from the open windows. In fact, a small crowd had collected on the curbstone to listen to a rollicking coon melody which was being sung to a ragtime accompaniment.

"John Dobley, what does this mean?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"I can assure you that I know nothing about

it, my dear. This is the most peculiar thing! Are you sure it's our house?"

"It's our house; but it doesn't look as though it were," said Mrs. Dobley. "You know all about this; you needn't tell me, Mr. Dobley."

"I know no more about it than you do, Honora. He seems to be entertaining."

"Seems to be! He seems to have the whole East Side in my drawing-room, judging from the noise. I am going in to find out just what this means."

Mrs. Dobley stepped out and went up the stoop, followed by her husband. They didn't have to ring. A colored man opened the door with a welcoming smile.

"Ladies' dressing-room one flight up, back," he said politely. "Gentlemen's hats this way to the right."

"Well, upon—my—word," said Mrs. Dobley.

"Where is Mr. Freshington?" demanded Dobley.

"Right this way to the hat-room; ladies' dressing-room upstairs back," said the colored man, welcoming two new arrivals.

The Dobleys found themselves carried along the hall. The house seemed to be full of people. There were a number of long-haired men who looked like musicians or poets crowded in

one corner of the hall, and when Mrs. Dobley looked to see what was the reason, she saw her best punch-bowl on a table. The guests were helping themselves.

"What are you going to do?" she asked her husband, with horrible calmness.

"I'm going to find Freshington," said Dobley, with an awful look in his eye. "Hadn't you better come away somewhere?"

"Never! I'm going to stay right here until——"

"Will you please pass upstairs, madam?" said the colored man. "There are some ladies waiting to get by."

Almost in a trance, Mrs. Dobley passed upstairs and into her own bedroom. A tall, gaunt woman, with a deep voice, was powdering her nose before the mirror. A younger woman, in a shirt waist, was pinning down her belt at the back. They looked at Mrs. Dobley curiously.

"I think Charley Freshington is just the jolliest entertainer!" said one of the women. "Why, this is just like a party to-night! And he's only belonged to the club three months! He apologized for the looks of things—said his folks were away; but I think it's pretty nice, don't you?"

A stentorian voice came up from the drawing-room, preceded by a sudden stillness.

"Ther-r-r-e was pr—r—ldin' Casey's manner," it began.

"Oh, there's Mr. Bugly beginning to recite," said the tall woman. "We mustn't miss that. Come on."

They went out and a maid helped Mrs. Dobley to take off her hat. She sat limply staring about her. Somehow she felt as though she were some one else.

"Is there anything I can get you, madam?" asked the maid.

"No—yes—that is, will you please tell me what this is—what is going on here?"

"It is a meeting of the Murray Hill Literary Association; but really it's more like a party. Mr. Freshington has ordered supper and all."

"Oh, yes; oh, yes, I had forgotten," said Mrs. Dobley.

Just then she heard a scuffle in the hall, and some one said: "Really, sir, I cannot permit you. This is the ladies' dressing-room."

Mrs. Dobley recognized her husband's voice replying angrily, and tottered to the door, just as two girls in pink came in.

"Lots of queer people here to-night!" whispered one of them. "That man in the hall isn't a member. Did you notice that woman that just went out?"

The music of a waltz came up from the parlor as Mrs. Dobley confronted her husband, whose eyes were wild and glittering.

"I can't find Freshington anywhere," he said; "there's such a crowd that you can't get through. I think he has sneaked out. I don't know what we can do. There's a caterer spreading a buffet supper in the dining-room, and they've just opened a keg of beer on the roof."

Mrs. Dobley: "Oh! oh! oh!"

"Yes, they have it all fixed up with Chinese lanterns and rugs and things. It looks very nice. Perhaps you'd better come up. It's nice and cool."

"Are you taking leave of your senses?" asked Mrs. Dobley. "Do you think for a moment——"

"Please don't block the hallway there," said a voice, and a young man with a red ribbon in his buttonhole touched Dobley lightly on the sleeve.

"Pardon me, sir," he said politely in answer to Dobley's infuriated glare; "but I am on the reception committee, and——"

"Do you know of a room in this house that isn't full?" asked Dobley, clutching his hair.

"Let me see?" said the young man pleasantly. "The coat-room is right back of this. Upstairs we have a smoking-room in the front, and Mr.

Freshington has given up his own room to Roughit and Tumbull for their make-up."

"Rough—Roughit and what?" said Dobley in a whisper.

"Roughit and Tumbull, the renowned German comedians. Mr. Freshington is a friend of theirs, and they accepted his invitation for this evening."

"Oh, yes, of course, of course," said Dobley. "How about the servants' rooms?"

"Well, I believe Mr. Freshington has invited some of the officers of the club who live out of town to remain, and he has given up the rooms to them."

"Oh, he has! Ha! ha! ha! ha!" said Mrs. Dobley hysterically. "Take me away!"

Just as Dobley led his wife down the stairs which commanded a view of the drawing-room they saw a stout lady in a low-necked gown dart into the middle of the room and throw her arms wildly in the air.

"I want free life and I want fresh air——" she yelled.

"Why doesn't some one open a window?" said Mrs. Dobley. "The woman will faint!"

"—and—a——life—a——and—a——and——alas-s-s-s——ha!" went on the fat lady.

"Oh, take me to the cellar, or anywhere!"

wailed Mrs. Dobley. "They're all crazy! I'm crazy!"

"No, my dear; now do control yourself. That is Mrs. Shudderington, the poetess; don't you recognize her from her photographs? Freshington has a lot of very distinguished people here tonight. You see that pale man over by the mantelpiece? That's Zincline who eats glass, you know. They're all very nice people—a little, a little——"

"Tough," suggested Mrs. Dobley.

"Not at all my dear, er—unconventional—er—Bohemian and all that. I recollect now that Freshington sent me tickets for one of these meetings somewhere in Harlem. Why, there is Alberta, the Human Fly. Do you see that little blonde girl in white? She walks on the ceiling."

"I'd like to see her walk on my ceiling!" said Mrs. Dobley. "Are you ever going to find that man Freshington?"

"It won't do much good now, anyhow. It's best to let them get out quietly, my dear, believe me. It's an unfortunate occurrence, but——"

"It's the greatest of all lubricators,
The best thing on earth for your neck!"

Then there was a loud burst of applause, a tapping of glasses and cries of "Speech! Speech!"

The Dobleys tried to push past the crowd on the stairs, but they couldn't budge the listening guests. A voice began:

"Ladies and gentlemen and fellow-members of the Murray Hill Literary Club: I am proud to say that I have been selected to congratulate the club and its able and efficient officers on this most successful midsummer meeting. Thanks to the hospitality of our host, Mr. Freshington [cheers and applause], we have enjoyed this most auspicious occasion under circumstances that will always remain a most pleasant memory in the annals of this association. We have with us to-night some of the most distinguished representatives of the arts, of which fact we are deservedly proud. And now, ladies and gentlemen, on your behalf it gives me great pleasure to present to our generous host [loud cheers] this token of our kindly appreciation of his entertainment to-night, this small loving cup, which I hereby present with our most cordial wishes."

There was a wild burst of applause and then a stillness. Then a voice, the voice of Freshington, was heard.

"That's him!" said Dobley.

"I can assure you, my friends," said Freshington, "that I was entirely unprepared for this beautiful gift which you have favored me with

and for which I thank you, one and all. If the welcome you have enjoyed under my poor roof has——" [loud cheers].

"Listen to that!" hissed Dobley. "Listen!"

"Sh—h—h! Keep still!" said a man in front of him, and a chorus woke the echoes of the Dobley home once more:

> "For he's a jolly good fellow,
> For he's a jolly good fellow!"

"They seem to be having an awfully good time," said Mrs. Dobley, "and that coffee smells so good."

"I'll get some," said Dobley. "Come into the library. It's empty, for a wonder!"

"It's near four now. They can't stay much longer," said Mrs. Dobley. "But I hope this will be a lesson to——"

> "On the road to Mandalay
> Where the flying fishes play!"

sang the Murray Hill literary persons from below. Dobley got a waiter.

"Bring us everything you have—everything, see?" he said. "We're starving, starving; do you understand what that means?"

"Yes, sir; certainly, sir," said the polite colored man. "I noticed you didn't get down to supper."

As he disappeared the Dobleys looked at each other in silence, while the chorus swelled beneath them. The man came back with a bounteously spread tray. The Dobleys fell ravenously on jellied chicken and tongue sandwiches and ice cream.

"This is a terrible thing," said Dobley, eating a ribbon-tied pie, without removing the bow; "a terrible thing."

"But it's a good supper," said Mrs. Dobley, as she ate her salad. "Really, I was quite faint. Yes, some coffee, please, and——"

"Why, Dobley, old man!" said a voice in the doorway, "this is a surprise. Don't move, don't move. I'm glad you got something to eat. Enjoy yourself."

"Freshington. I can't see. I can't understand," said Dobley, with a sandwich in each hand, "how you——"

"Forget it, old man. I tell you, I'm glad you're here. I wish you'd present me to——"

"Mrs. Dobley, sir," said that lady hastily, swallowing a maccaroon and balancing a plate of ice cream on her knee. "I am sure I——"

"Charmed, I'm sure," said the young man. "I'm honored by your presence, and I want you to hear my friends Roughit and Tumbull, when you have finished. Why, I am so glad you are

here. I—I—Dobley have a cigar? Mrs. Dobley, allow me to help you to some of this iced meringue. It's capital. I want you to sit right where you are, for you will command a splendid view of Roughit and Tumbull's sketch. You'll excuse me for a moment, won't you? I see some one wants me outside."

As he vanished, Dobley looked at his wife. She had finished the iced meringue and looked happier. Dobley bit the end off Freshington's cigar.

"One of my own," he said to his wife. "Can you beat him?"

"Hush!" said Mrs. Dobley; "Roughit and Tumbull are beginning."

And that is how the Dobleys came to join the Murray Hill Literary Club, with which Dobley is to make his début as Hamlet this winter.

IN AN AUTOMOBILE

"THE extinction of the horse is inevitable," said Mr. Dobley. "It is sad to think of the noble beast so long known as man's best friend passing into the background."

"I notice they have to get them out every once in a while when the cables and trolleys get out of order," said Mrs. Dobley. "Then how can people talk of the extinction of the horse while driving remains so popular?"

"It cannot be compared to the exhilaration that one experiences in a horseless carriage," said Dobley. "There is a sense of power, of complete control that one can never know with a horse in front of one."

"Has somebody been trying to sell you one of those things?" said Mrs. Dobley suspiciously.

"Oh, no, my dear," answered her husband, with a guilty look. "Van Ripper is very much interested in them and took me out for a spin the other day. I tell you it was great!"

"I am sure I should always prefer the old-fashioned way of driving," said Mrs. Dobley. "It's

safer and pleasanter in every way than this speeding against time by machinery. Then they are so conspicuous."

"The carriage that I was looking at is safety itself," said Dobley. "It has been tested up to two thousand to the square inch and can stand even more. It is the Get There automobile that I have been practising with."

"I should be dreadfully afraid to go out in one of them without a driver, or a steerer, or whatever you call them."

"It is an age of progress and we must keep up with the procession," said Dobley. "We are living at high pressure, and the automobile is typical of the era."

"You have been reading a circular," said Mrs. Dobley. "You can ride in one of those things if you like, but I'll stick to a hansom."

"Mrs. Van Ripper is learning to operate one of those new runabouts," said Dobley carelessly.

"Mrs. Van Ripper is?"

"Yes; Van Ripper says his wife is a thoroughly up-to-date woman, and that if it became the fashion to ride camels she'd be the first to gallop through the park on one. He says she has some stunning gowns ordered specially for the 'mobe.'"

"Mrs. Van is so faddy! She's always up to anything that is loud and fast."

"You must admit she gets ahead of every one else and gets the credit of leading the fashion. Mark my words, Emma, in a month or two you'll be just as anxious to automobile as any one else. Then you'll simply be following her lead; that's all."

"Imitate her! Never! I'll take lessons first and learn to run one of the things before she does. Did you say you had one?"

"Er—not quite, my dear. I've partially arranged with Van Ripper's friend Knockem, who is agent for the Get There, and he's given me the use of one while I am learning."

"Don't they blow up sometimes?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"It's all the way in which they are handled," said Dobley. "You must understand them first, of course. I've become quite attached to the machine I've been operating. It is much handsomer than Van Ripper's."

"Are you sure you can manage it, John?"

"I've been operating it alone for two weeks now," said Dobley, "and I think I may say without boasting that I have mastered it. I passed Van Ripper on Riverside Drive yesterday and left him as if he was standing still."

"Did you say Van Ripper was interested in selling the carriage?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"No; he's just a friend of Knockem. He admits his 'mobe' isn't in it with mine. It's a daisy."

"Well, if you are quite sure you can manage it, and sure it won't run away or blow up, or anything, bring it round this afternoon and take me out. I don't intend to have Mrs. Van Ripper get ahead of me."

That afternoon Dobley came up to the door with a dash in his red-wheeled automobile, and after a convulsive start it settled at the curb. Mrs. Dobley beckoned to her husband from the upper window.

"I can't leave the carriage," he said, calling up from the street.

"Can't you hitch it up?" she asked. "Won't it stand quiet?"

"My dear, this isn't a lady's horse," said Dobley nervously, looking at his watch. "It's only regulated to stand for twenty minutes. They've set it at the stable. So hurry down. It might start without us."

When Mrs. Dobley came out, there was an admiring crowd around the machine, and all the windows in the block had a group of eager faces.

"I am dreadfully nervous," said Mrs. Dobley, backing off from the machine, which had begun

to vibrate and sputter. "That's what I wanted to tell——"

"Get in quick or the blanked thing'll start," said Dobley, hustling his wife in and falling in after her just as the carriage reared and started forward with a snort.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Dobley, seizing her husband's arm. "Let me get out! It will tip sure. Don't go so fast!"

"Sit perfectly still, Mrs. Dobley, and let go my arm. I want a free hand for this operating brake. But don't overbalance this side in that way. You have to be careful with these things as with a rowboat. One move too much one way——"

Just then the machine lurched up toward a lamppost and then seemed to change its mind and rush in a zigzag fashion down the street.

"It seems to be waltzing," said Mrs. Dobley. "Look out for this funeral coming up. It's unlucky to meet a funeral. I know we'll be killed."

"Nonsense, Mrs. Dobley," said Dobley, tugging violently at the brake. "I understand this thing, remember. I am not going to do any stunts to show off. I like a nice, steady gait——"

"Then, for gracious sake, why don't you get into it," said Mrs. Dobley, catching her breath as the vehicle escaped one of the funeral coaches.

"It will slow up presently," said Dobley, who

was out of breath himself. "Don't make me nervous while I have this brake in my hand. It always acts this way when it meets anything on the road. Gets kind of balky."

"I should say—it—does," said Mrs. Dobley, holding on with both hands. "I'm scared to death. Now it's wabbling like a rocking-horse. Oh—h—h!"

The automobile, after a few internal convulsions, suddenly reared and sniffed, then plunged around a corner, upsetting an Italian fruit-stand and nearly killing a street-sweeper, who shouted unpleasant things after the speeding wagon.

"You'll run into something, sure," said Mrs. Dobley. "Why did you turn into this street, anyhow? It's so crowded that it's dangerous!"

"It seemed to turn itself then," said Dobley, wiping off his brow with his gloved hand. "Wait till we get out in the open country. Then you'll see how delight——"

Suddenly the automobile swerved into the gutter and stopped before a saloon.

"What on earth are you stopping here for, John Dobley? I never heard of such a thing!"

"It's acting a little queer to-day. It's never stopped here before, I assure you!"

"Well, start it quick and get away. There is a crowd gathering."

"It's got to stop twenty minutes," said Dobley, looking at his watch. "You see, I had it set that way to avoid trouble. It's easier to man——"

The automobile rumbled and then jerked itself forward for a block without leaving the gutter. A crowd of small boys followed it, jeering at Mr. Dobley. He grew red in the face and tugged at the handle-bar. Two policemen came over and pushed the carriage until it was headed for the middle of the street. It began to move easier.

"Suppose you turn up the next corner and get into the drive," said Mrs. Dobley; "then we'll have more room."

"All right," said Dobley hoarsely, grabbing his hat, as it fell over the side of the carriage. "Just you sit still and enjoy yourself."

"If I ever get home alive, I'll not come out in this thing again," said Mrs. Dobley, almost sobbing, as the carriage knocked down an old gentleman and sent him spinning like a top against a soda-water sign. "It's dreadful! Why don't you stop and help that poor old gentleman?"

"I—really—haven't—time," said Dobley, in a jerky way, as the automobile began to prance and curve in front of a brewery wagon which accommodatingly got out of the way, the driver laughing rudely at Dobley.

At the corner the carriage gave two desperate

lurches, as though it contemplated turning, and then changed its mind. It continued on up the avenue.

"I thought you were going to turn down to the drive," said Mrs. Dobley. "You said you would."

"I know it, I know it! Can't a man change his mind once in a while? It's going to—going to——"

"I don't think you know what it's going to do," said Mrs. Dobley. "It's going to run away just now. Oh! Oh!"

The carriage started forward at a desperate rate of speed. Every vehicle on the avenue began to pull up and get out of the way, as if the automobile was an engine going to a fire.

"I—tell—you—this—is—sport!" jerked Dobley, while his hat flew off in the rear. "It's—like—living—this—is."

"Wait and get your hat," said Mrs. Dobley. "There is a boy running after us with it."

"Oh, never mind!" said Dobley. "It's—the thing—nowadays—to—drive—without a hat!"

The machine hitched violently backward; then rose on its front wheels and hissed.

"It's bucking like a broncho to-day," said Dobley, whose hair looked like an Indian's. "Would you mind staying in and holding this bar while I

get out and turn the thing around so we can get off the avenue into a side street?"

"I'll jump out if you move!" said Mrs. Dobley. "Why, there, it's turning beautifully."

"Yes, this is a pleasanter street," said Dobley in a relieved way, as the automobile turned like a lamb and proceeded decorously along the asphalt. "I thought you'd like it better. Just give me time and I'll show you how to run this machine."

"This is the first easy breath I've drawn since we left the house," said Mrs. Dobley, fixing her hat on straight. "I wish you had your hat. You look awfully queer."

"Now watch me turn according to directions," said Dobley as they reached the drive. "Reverse the brake and reduce the rate of speed slightly. The carriage will answer immediately——"

"Oh!" screamed Mrs. Dobley as the automobile suddenly began to swing round in a circle.

"It doesn't do to scream out like that, Honora," said Dobley, tugging at the handle-bar. "These things are sensitive——"

Suddenly the carriage settled itself, and after backing and shying a few times dashed ahead like a bullet. The Dobleys held on for life. Dobley's face was set and his hair waved in the breeze. A mounted policeman galloped after

them, shouting. Mrs. Dobley was sobbing. Once more carriages, horses, and pedestrians drew out of the way of the Dobley equipage. A dog started to chase after it, barking loudly. The policeman shouted, but all in vain.

"It's—running away!" screamed Mrs. Dobley. "Help! Help!"

"It's got to stop some time!" said Dobley, between his teeth. "So long as folks get out of the way it doesn't matter. It's exhilarating and healthy to feel the cool air in one's face. The view is superb from the summit. Really, Mrs. Dobley, I cannot understand what is the matter——"

Just then the automobile saw a massive gateway opening into a private park. A sign read "No Admittance, Private Grounds," but the automobile didn't mind that. It turned daintily in and rushed across the lawn and over a flower-bed.

"Did you see that sign?" said Mrs. Dobley, clutching her husband's arm. "Are you mad?"

"Don't believe in signs," said Dobley. "Besides, I'm not running this now. It's the machine that's going. Great Scott!"

The machine backed itself over the lawn and the flower-bed, and then down the carriageway and into the road.

"Are we going home backward?" asked Mrs.

Dobley. "Oh, if it would only stop long enough for me to get out before we are arrested!"

But the machine jumped in the air twice when it reached the gate, and then continued on its way. It began to throw itself rakishly from side to side, something like the way in which a trotting horse throws out its legs.

"Where are we going now?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Blessed if I know!" said Dobley; "but you can trust this mobe all right, Honora. It's a little restive to-day, and doesn't respond to regulations, but it's all right when you give it its head."

"Suppose it doesn't stop, but just goes on and on," said Mrs. Dobley. "What on earth will we do? If you could only turn it toward home!"

"It will turn when it's good and ready," said Dobley. "It goes better when you humor it. Listen; it's actually chuckling and sputtering as though it liked it. There's the High Tone Hotel up there on the hill, Honora, and, by Jove, there are the Van Rippers up on the piazza."

"Well, look the other way. I don't want them to see us in this state. My hair is coming down, and I'm all spattered with mud; and as for you, you are a sight!"

"All right, Honora; just look out over the river, as though you were enjoying the scenery,

and we'll spurt past. Do you hear them laughing up there? Van Ripper is about the worst kind of a fool I know."

"I know they are laughing at us, John Dobley, and I don't wonder! My gracious, where are you going? Oh, my!"

For the automobile, evidently recognizing its friends on the porch of the High Tone Hotel, with a magnificent sweep and an extra dash of speed, sprinted gracefully along the roadway and stopped with a flourish at the main door of the hotel, where the Dobleys were greeted with shouts of joyous laughter and some applause. They went home in a hansom.

DOBLEY AND HIS DEN

MRS. DOBLEY screamed slightly as her husband carefully opened a box that he had brought home, and took out a grinning skull, which he placed upon the library table.

"I have decided," said Dobley, "to have a den, and no den is complete without a skull. I purchased this to-day, together with its most interesting history. It has quite a romance attached to it. Some day, when the den is completed, I shall tell you the story and will practise the recital of it. There are certain methods of handling it while one is telling the story that make it sound very true."

Mrs. Dobley peered curiously at the skull. "There is a tag attached to it," she said, "with a price-mark on it. I don't believe it is a real skull!"

"Of course it isn't a real skull," said Dobley, "but it was foolish of Freshington not to remove the tag just the same. You see, you buy these skulls at the Japanese shops and you invent the interesting story."

"Well, I much prefer a make-believe skull," said Mrs. Dobley; "it's more cheerful."

"And more durable," said Dobley. "These skulls are very popular as ornaments for bachelor apartments, and they are subjected to hard usage that would smash a real skull in about a minute. I've seen one used as a football to illustrate a certain part of the game that had come up for discussion. Sometimes they serve as missiles, and owing to their light, rubbery nature they do no damage whatever to mirrors or to furniture."

"But I can't see why you want a den," said Mrs. Dobley. "You lounge all over the house now. Isn't that enough?"

"Is there one room in the house," asked Dobley impressively, "that I can call my very own? Is there even one small corner stamped with the personality of Dobley?"

"There is that small room off the library with nothing in it," said Mrs. Dobley; "and, of course, you could use it as a smoking-room also."

"All I ask," said Dobley, caressing the skull, "is that I may have my own ideas. I want room and light and comfortable old things. I want a big table for books and papers that may be left and kept in disorder just as long as I please."

"Well, I can imagine what it will look like," said Mrs. Dobley, "but I'll have the room cleared

out to-morrow. It will be rather a cute idea to show it to folks and say: 'This is Mr. Dobley's den. Of course I am not responsible for its disorder.' Then sometimes they look very picturesque. Mr. Van Ripper has one done entirely in posters."

"Not any for me, thanks," said Dobley. "I intend this room for use, not as an exhibit to amuse guests, or a chamber of horrors to show them after dinner. I intend that it shall gradually take on character. It may become like the tent of a soldier, the cell of a monk, or the bower of a sybarite. I shall let it go its own way."

The next night, when Dobley came home, his wife was brimming over with interest in the new den. "I've been working over it all day," she said, "and if I fell off the stepladder once, I did so twenty times!"

"The stepladder?" inquired Dobley. "There was no frescoing or decorating necessary, I trust? You have not been putting up a floral bell, or training ivy over the walls?"

"It was just an idea I had about the walls," said Mrs. Dobley. "The coloring was so cold and inartistic. It would have been all right for a blonde man, but I thought something more Oriental in tone would suit you better."

Dobley looked up in some alarm. "My dear,"

he said, "I hope you will remember that my idea in originating this den was as a sort of relief to the artistic tone of the rest of the house. Bear in mind, I do not want any stained-glass effects or hangings. I want to impress the nook with my own personality—my fads, tastes, and whims."

"Oh, just wait until you see it," said Mrs. Dobley. "It's just a background, you know. You can go ahead and impress your personality right away; but I wanted the walls to be right."

She led the way to the den. Mrs. Dobley had covered the walls with some dark red cheese-cloth from floor to ceiling. In the centre it was gathered in about the chandelier, producing the effect of a tent roofing. But Mrs. Dobley had introduced another novel effect which caused Dobley to start back in amazement.

"Gee-whilikens!" he said. "What are they? Do you see them all over the ceiling? They gave me quite a turn."

Mrs. Dobley laughed merrily. "I knew it would surprise you," she said. "It is the very newest thing in decorative effects. They are all little Japanese bugs, beetles, frogs, spiders, and——"

"Snakes!" said Dobley nervously.

"Yes," said Mrs. Dobley, "you get them by

the dozen, and they have springs in their feet so that they catch on to drapery. Don't you think them odd?"

"Very," said Dobley. "They are decidedly unique and startling."

"I hate to have rooms that look like everybody else's," said Mrs. Dobley, "especially a den."

"But," said Dobley, "don't you think this may conflict with my ideas of impressing my——"

"Oh, pshaw! It's only the ceiling," said Mrs. Dobley, "and it's the newest thing out."

"But I'm no entomologist," said Dobley. "Besides, my dear, I can imagine occasions when a man seeking rest in his den might find it confusing."

"Not when you get used to it," said Mrs. Dobley. "I thought it would be nice to fasten the skull over one of the gas-jets instead of a globe, so the light would shine through."

"My dear Mrs. Dobley," said Dobley, "you don't seem to understand. The skull must lie around carelessly, like a book or a piece of bric-à-brac. A fellow comes in and says: 'That's a fine skull you have there.'

"Then I take it up and say, 'Yes—funny history that skull has,' and I go on with the story. Freshington has told me some good stories in connection with his skull."

"A different one every time?" suggested Mrs. Dobley.

"Well, he forgets sometimes, naturally, but it's interesting, when he begins, to make bets with yourself as to whether he's going to spring some new yarn or simply tell the same old story. If you put that skull on the gas-jet, it will seem too much like straining for an effect."

"Oh, well just have it around anywhere," said Mrs. Dobley. "I was only trying to make the room look pretty. You fix it up yourself."

"My dear," said Dobley, "I don't want you to lose interest in it, but keep those high art ideas of yours in subjection until the room has acquired personality."

Mr. Dobley was laden with packages when he arrived at the Dobley home next evening. Mrs. Dobley was chilly, and affected an entire lack of interest as to the contents of Dobley's parcels.

Dobley, piqued, proceeded alone to the den, while Mrs. Dobley seated herself at the library table and buried herself in a magazine.

"Great Scott!" said Dobley suddenly, "what on earth is this?"

"Did you speak to me, dear?" said Mrs. Dobley from the other room.

"What is this catafalque that I find in the den?" he asked.

Mrs. Dobley rose and looked in. "Why, that is just the sewing-machine and the steamer trunks. I've always wanted a place to put them, and that corner just suits. The machine completely spoiled my bay window upstairs!"

Dobley's arms fell limply by his sides. "I give up!" he said. "What's the use of trying to have a den? Who ever heard of a sewing-machine in a den?"

"Why, you could put a screen around it," said Mrs. Dobley.

"Yes—and stand a rubber-plant on top, and hang a portière around it," said Dobley. "No, I'll give up the idea if you are going to crowd all the surplus machines and clothes-wringers in here. I don't know how to sew, and I'm not going to learn. There is no reason for its being here!"

"Oh, very well! I'll have it taken out if you insist," said Mrs. Dobley, "but if you will only allow me to help you with the den and don't criticise every little thing I do it will get along so much better."

"It's the personality of a den that counts," said Dobley, taking a stuffed alligator and two stuffed ducks out of a box. "Now, what do you think of those?"

"What are they for?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Well, they're not to keep hairpins in or to scratch matches on," said Dobley. "They are purely ornamental, and are supposed to suggest the idea of a hunter. You can always throw out a hint that you've shot 'em in the South."

"But you never do hunt?" said Mrs. Dobley.

"I used to when I was a youngster," said Dobley, "and once a hunter always a hunter."

"Did you hunt alligators?"

"No, frogs," said Dobley; "same family. And here I have a pair of foils and two snowshoes; gives the room a sort of sporty effect when all these things get hung up."

"It looks just a little bit like a museum," said Mrs. Dobley. "Are you going to have a catalogue?"

"It will gradually assume a more definite character," replied Dobley. "These things take time."

Next evening Mrs. Dobley triumphantly led her husband to the den, where she had placed a large pair of antlers and a tiger skin on the wall. "I got them at a bargain," she said. "Isn't the tiger skin too sweet for anything?"

"All we need now," said Dobley, "is a free lunch and a reputation. We'd get all the business."

He hung a pair of boxing-gloves and a lacrosse stick under the mantelpiece and stood off to view the effect.

"There's a picture downstairs," said Mrs. Dobley, "of two fish hanging on a board wall."

"Planked shad, I presume," said Dobley.

"I've always hated it," said she, "but now it seems to me as though this is just the place for it. It will look well right in this corner."

"Exactly," said Dobley, "and to-morrow I will bring home a sign to go with it."

"A sign?" inquired Mrs. Dobley.

"Sure! It's the proper thing to have signs in a den; makes it look more like a college room and brings back memories of youth."

So a bunch of signs came home with Dobley next night. Under the fish picture he tacked one which read:

"WE SHALL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR HATS AND COATS."

And on the door he put one which stated in red letters:

"WE SHALL BE CLOSED MONDAY—LEGAL HOLIDAY."

In a corner by the fireplace he adjusted a statement to this effect:

"ALL PERSONS RIDING ON THIS ELEVATOR DO SO AT THEIR OWN RISK."

"I have a more appropriate one for the outside of the door," said Mrs. Dobley. She pointed to a label, which said:

"THIS WAY TO THE MENAGERIE."

"This room is getting to be quite a joke," said Dobley; "but just wait."

"It is gradually becoming impressed with your personality," said Mrs. Dobley.

"We mustn't overdo it," said Dobley. "I'll try to find some more subdued effects to tone down the whole into a harmony."

By next evening Mrs. Dobley had added a bowl of goldfish and some blue china to the furnishings. Dobley brought home some pipes and a set of golf clubs, which he added to the collection. The cook brought up a pair of Indian clubs and a tennis racket that she found in the cellar and tendered them repectfully to Dobley. She said the new room seemed to be the place for them.

"Every little helps," said Dobley delightedly.

"The room is gradually acquiring a tone. It will be the most restful place in the house when it is finished. I've ordered a case of firearms and a dozen machetes and battle-axes that will give an airy touch to this corner near the window."

"The chandelier looks so crude," said Mrs. Dobley. "Can't we improve on it in any way?"

"I intend to have a lamp," said Dobley, "with a shade composed entirely of comic masks. An actor that I knew had one, and it was very striking. Then a few candles in sconces on the wall will complete the lighting arrangements. A few photos here and there——"

"There is an old opium pipe in the garret that Uncle George brought from China," said Mrs. Dobley. "I had forgotten about it."

"The very thing!" said Dobley. "Let's have it down by all means."

Toward the end of the week the Dobley den was so full of added curiosities that there was hardly room to move about.

"It certainly is a dream!" exclaimed Dobley at the door. "It's so—so—heterogeneous!"

"And yet you objected to those few little Japanese bugs on the ceiling at first," said Mrs. Dobley with reproach.

"And now," said Dobley proudly, "there is no

branch of the animal or reptile family that is not represented."

Just then there was a ring at the bell and a long box was carried in by the maid, who placed it on the sofa.

"You promised to buy nothing more," said Mrs. Dobley, as her husband began to unscrew the top cover.

"It's only a little thing that Freshington suggested," he said. "I was telling him about the den to-day, and he said that while every den must have its skull, a still newer effect was——"

"What in the world are you unpacking there?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"This," said Dobley, shaking out a jointed life-size skeleton with a rattle. "You take one of these and just have it sitting carelessly by the fire or on the divan—like this—see? And you put a smoking-cap on one side of its head in this way. Rather neat——what?"

"So restful," said Mrs. Dobley.

IN WHICH THEY GAMBLE

"I HAD a remarkable dream last night," said Mr. Dobley to his wife. "It was the most beautiful dream I ever had in my life. Usually people dream foolish things or else have dreadful nightmares, in which they tumble off high mountain-tops or have other unpleasant experiences. But this dream was such a perfect poem that I dictated it to the typewriter and sent a copy to Freshington. Freshington, you know, believes in dreams. He buys and sells stocks according to his dreams. I thought there might be something in mine."

"What was it all about?" asked Mrs. Dobley curiously. Dobley took a typewritten slip from his pocket and began to read:

"I dreamed that I was walking through a beautiful rose garden. There were hundreds of roses of all sorts climbing over trelliswork arbors all in bloom, red and white and yellow and violet——"

"Violet roses!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley. "It must have been the cold soft-shell crabs with tartar sauce that did it!"

"If I thought that," said Dobley, "I'd have them every night for supper! I was gathering large quantities of these beautiful blosoms, but the supply seemed inexhaustible and the garden an endless maze. I seemed perfectly happy. Not a care or a cloud of any sort oppressed me——"

"Was I there?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"No, you didn't seem to be in it at all," said Mr. Dobley, in an apologetic tone. "I was alone and I had no affiliations of any sort with the world. I might have been a spirit except that I distinctly remember I wore a white duck suit with a pith helmet and russet shoes."

"How curious!" said Mrs. Dobley. "Go on."

"Suddenly, as I went farther into the grove of blooming vines, I came upon a beautiful girl sleeping in a bower of roses. She was surpassingly beautiful. Golden curls shaded a face that was simply perfect in its superbly chiselled features. Her arm were clasped gracefully beneath her head, and she slept as peacefully as a child. Suddenly I heard soft music around me, and, as though commanded by some unseen force I placed the roses I had gathered beside the sleeping goddess."

"How was she dressed?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"She was robed in a filmy garment of purest

white with golden embroidery upon it. It was like a drapery of the Orient. Suddenly she awoke, looked up startled at first, then smiled trustingly. 'Do not fear, fair maid,' I said, speaking as though I were a character in a play. 'Who art thou?'

"'I fear nothing,' she said proudly. 'Dost know who I am?'

"'I dost not,' I said, 'but I wouldst.'

"'I am Ariel,' she said, with a fascinating smile. Just then I woke up. Now, what do you think of that for a dream?"

"I think it was a foolish sort of dream," said Mrs. Dobley.

"Foolish!" said Mr. Dobley indignantly. "It was idyllic. It was an allegory, if I could only read it correctly. Freshington will probably make some big deal and corner the market on the strength of that dream."

Just then a telegram was handed to Mr. Dobley. He read it aloud:

"Horse named Ariel in first race to-day. Nothing can beat him. Sure to win. Keep it quiet. —FRESHINGTON."

"There!" said Dobley. "I told you he'd find something in that dream. I'll take his advice and put a small bet on Ariel just for fun. It was a lucky dream, and it would be throwing away

luck to neglect it. It will be like getting money in a letter. Meet me at the office at noon and I'll take you down to the track."

"I've never believed in dreams," said Mrs. Dobley, "and you know the old saying is that they always go by contraries. So the dream was so beautiful that perhaps it may signify bad luck instead of good luck."

"I intend to put it to the test, at all events," said Mr. Dobley, "and it will be a pleasant outing."

Mrs. Dobley was punctual and was in her pleasantest mood and her prettiest gown. The day was perfect, and Dobley explained how the races were won as they went down. Mrs. Dobley was green on the subject of horse-racing, and Mr. Dobley enlightened her on the qualities that made a horse beat the others, explained pedigrees and the rules governing the sport.

"That's funny," she said. "Here is a horse named James Pepper. We had a gardener named James Pepper when I was a child."

"Was he fast?" asked Dobley anxiously.

"I remember him very distinctly. He had whiskers all round his chin from ear to ear."

"That's a hoodoo," said Dobley. "He hasn't a chance."

The Dobleys just reached the grand stand in

time for Dobley to hurry away to place a bet on Ariel. He plunged heavily and came back radiant.

"Twenty to one," he said. "It was forty to one five minutes ago, but there's a quiet tip going round that Ariel will win hands down. You can't stop him, they say, once he gets going. Only he's a little bit hard to start. I went in the paddock and looked at him, and there's fire in his eye. I also saw James Pepper, and he's an old skate."

"Don't talk like that," said Mrs. Dobley. "I've just sent a messenger to bet five dollars on him."

"A clothes-horse would have as much chance," said Mr. Dobley. "I am surprised at you doing such a thing without consulting me. How much did you get?"

"A hundred to one," said Mrs. Dobley simply. "I thought it would be nice if he won. He may have a chance."

"He has," said Mr. Dobley. "Just one chance. If all the other horses fall dead, James Pepper has a good chance. I tell you Ariel is going to waltz away with this race. It's easy."

The horses came filing to the starting-post, and Mr. Dobley pointed out Ariel, who had a jockey with a pale blue jacket.

"Which is James Pepper?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Do you see that knock-kneed, blind beast lumbering along last with a colored boy on his back wearing a polka-dotted shroud?" asked Dobley. "That is James Pepper, and the position he holds now will be retained by him all through."

"I don't think he's so bad," said Mrs. Dobley. "He looks so patient. That other horse is biting the fence up."

"Patience," said Dobley, "is all right in a music teacher or a bill collector. In a horse it's speed and spirit that count. Ariel is biting the fence because he is keyed up for this race and is naturally restive. But wait till you see him go."

"Why, he is just like a circus horse," said Mrs. Dobley. "He is trying to waltz."

"That's his fiery spirit that makes him act that way. Whoop! There they go."

But Ariel and James Pepper both refused to go, and the start was spoiled. James Pepper stood rooted to the ground looking idly over the landscape, as though he enjoyed the scenery. Once in a while he whisked his tail.

"Now Ariel is standing on his fore-legs," said Mrs. Dobley. "He is exactly like a high-school horse. Everybody is laughing at him! He's trying to bite the starter over the fence."

"The starter deserves it," said Mr. Dobley. "That horse has instinct. You can't fool me on a horse. Watch him kick up his heels. He's playful. He'll simply frisk in."

"Why do they lead him way back there?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Because they are afraid of him," said Mr. Dobley. "They wish to get him in a bad place; but they can't help his winning."

There were several more false starts, all spoiled by Ariel, and a murmur of indignation went up from the grand stand against the horse for his bad behavior.

"You see," said Dobley, "there's a prejudice against the horse. A poor dumb beast that can't defend itself. Those other mules don't know how to run, that's the trouble. Ariel knows it's no start, so he refuses to go. He'll be all the fresher for it!"

Suddenly the horses made another start, and with a vicious lunge Ariel started forward. But the flag had not fallen, and the horses were recalled. But Ariel continued.

"Great Scott!" said Dobley. "Why doesn't that fool boy pull him up?"

But on Ariel flew like the wind. Through the glass the boy on his back could be seen leaning back in his saddle in a vain attempt to stop him.

Ariel went like a demon. Everybody was watching him now with interest. The starter, the jockeys and their horses all watched the fleeing animal that was now nearing the starting-post again. He flashed by the waiting horses at a terrible speed and prepared to make another round of the track. Men ran out in his path and endeavored to stop him, but he heeded them not at all. The boy on his back was now hanging round his neck in fright. He realized that he was on a runaway horse.

"He can run, can't he?" said Mrs. Dobley.

"Nothing could beat him," said Dobley ruefully, "if he was in the race; but he can't win now. He'll be too tired. Great jumping ——, he's going round again!"

Sure enough, Ariel was now beginning his third lap. Apparently with no diminution of speed he dashed ahead like a crazy horse, with a badly scared rider. As he came around and began his fourth circling of the track, the crowd yelled with laughter. He was not a favorite, and his performance amused the majority of the onlookers. Dobley did not laugh, however. He sat solemnly gazing at his dream horse and wondering why he had been so foolish as to take Freshington's advice.

Ariel came in after running his race four times

over, still fresh, but satisfied with the exercise he had had. He was led into the stable, while the grand stand applauded him for his performance.

This time the start was a success, the horses getting away together with James Pepper loping along lazily in the rear.

"Why doesn't he hurry?" asked Mrs. Dobley nervously.

"He doesn't know how," said Dobley. "He believes in taking life easy. He'll probably fall asleep when he is half way around."

Mrs. Dobley watched the polka-dotted jacket through her glass with interest.

"He is moving up a little!" she cried delightedly, "and all the others are whipping their horses, and they are falling back, all of them—all but James Pepper."

"It's no use," said Dobley sadly. "This isn't our day!"

"Wish that he wins and I'll give you half if he does," cried Mrs. Dobley excitedly. "He's next to first now!"

Dobley took the glass lazily and looked through it at the cloud of dust just at the turn for the homestretch.

"Well, I'll be blessed," he said. "That old mule is ahead!"

"Will he win? Will he win?" said Mrs. Dobley, clutching Dobley's arm.

And just then James Pepper ran in jauntily and easily, whisking his tail slightly, as though he were amused at the excitement he was creating.

Mr. Dobley had no money left to bet on any of the other races, and Mrs. Dobley refused to lend him any on the ground that gambling was wicked.

Going home they met Freshington in the parlor car. He looked crestfallen.

"As a wizard, Mr. Freshington," said Dobley scathingly, "you are a flat failure!"

"I'll tell you how it is, old man," said Freshington; "when I read over that dream of yours a few moments ago, I came across the violet roses. I hadn't noticed them at first. Violet roses are a sure hoodoo in a dream. When you dream of 'em, you should stay quietly at home and engage in no large speculations of any sort. I didn't think of it till afterward."

"There," said Mrs. Dobley triumphantly, "I knew it was all the cold soft-shell crabs!"

"But just the same," said Dobley, "Ariel was a speedy horse."

"Ariel," said Mr. Freshington solemnly, "was a bird."

"But James Pepper," said Mrs. Dobley, "was a race-horse."

"Did you have him?" asked Freshington. "How on earth did you pick him out?"

"Mrs. Dobley," said that lady's husband, "plays on form strictly."

ATMOSPHERE OF THE TABLE-D'HÔTE

"MR. FRESHINGTON has invited us to honor him with our company at dinner to-night," said Mr. Dobley over the breakfast-table.

"At one of those queer places?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"He has discovered a new table-d'hôte, which, he says, is the best ever," said Dobley.

"Is it on a roof or in a cellar this time?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"I believe it is located in a basement in a side street somewhere," said Dobley. "Freshington says the spaghetti is a dream."

"But they say that about every table-d'hôte," said Mrs. Dobley. "It always tastes the same to me. For my part, I don't like those places. Why doesn't he invite us to some place where we can eat something?"

"My dear, you are getting too effete. You fail to see the artistic beauty of simplicity. You like glitter, gilding, and——"

"Good cooking," said Mrs. Dobley, "and you can't get it at those places. I know every new

one that you discover is going to be different, and then we go——"

"And then?"

"We take a week to get over it. No, you can't have a good dinner and a cheap dinner at the same time. Yet at Steffani's they pretend to serve you with six courses for thirty-five cents—or is it forty cents?"

"Forty cents with wine, thirty-five without wine, my dear," said Mr. Dobley. "You see, they import their wine in such quantities that they can afford——"

"They don't import it; they make it up just before dinner. I saw them fixing it at Polenta's the night we went there. And don't you remember how you suffered after that dinner and we vowed we would never go again?"

"Well, Freshington says this place is delightful. And you should hear him talk about the atmosphere. It's quite like the Latin Quarter, he says; a perfect Bohemia."

"Always in an Italian restaurant! I can't see why one can't go to an American restaurant and——"

"And eat broiled lobster?"

"Aren't lobsters Bohemian?"

"They are expensive, my dear, and to be truly artistic one has to cultivate a chronic pecuniary

lepression. Lobsters are all right in the gilded halls of an uptown chop-house. The lobster typifies the gay world of pleasure; the Italian table-d'hôte the world of art."

"It is my impression," said Mrs. Dobley, "that inferior cooking causes lots of trouble in this world. If you are forced to eat horrid things you get disagreeable and — and — criminal. That's the trouble with Mr. Freshington. He goes about to those queer dinners, and you know how impossible he is."

"Freshington is a man with an artistic temperament doomed to the hardware business. He told me so himself. He says he'd like to be a painter and live in a studio and devote himself to art. Freshington's case is a sad one. So he goes about trying to imbibe art atmosphere."

"That is why you always act so funny when you go out with him, I suppose," said Mrs. Dobley. "The last time I recollect you left a poor, tired cabman at the door all night and told him you were going to take a Turkish bath."

"Tut, tut, my dear; why again revert to that poor man's unfortunate mistake?"

"Well, to avoid its happening again I think I shall go out with you to-night; and, remember, don't press me to eat anything; and when it's all

over, we can go to the Hyphen House for supper."

That evening the Dobleys picked their way through a side street swarming with screaming children at play. Swarthy, fierce-looking men stood in the doorways gesticulating violently as they talked in Italian. Finally they came to an old-fashioned brick house, where a lamp hung over a basement door. Within they found long tables, at one of which was their host, Freshington.

"Oh, how lovely of you to ask us," said Mrs. Dobley. "It's—it's so much nicer than Steffani's, isn't it?"

"Steffani's is no longer the resort of the brilliant throng that once gathered around its board," said Mr. Freshington. "There is no *esprit*, no atmosphere, nothing. Besides, they raised the price."

"And put a carpet on the floor," said Dobley.

"That was enough to ruin it," said Freshington; "but this—this is the real thing. Here you will see some of the brightest minds of the age."

"Who is that man over there eating macaroni with his knife?" whispered Mrs. Dobley. "It makes me nervous to see him."

"That's Goldbricque," said Freshington, lowering his voice. "You've heard of Goldbricque,

haven't you? I'll introduce you later on. He is a celebrated Spanish palmist. He knows everything. He's simply great. He's been in every court in Europe."

"Gracious, he almost sliced the tip of his nose off then! Why does he do it?"

"Just to show his contempt for empty forms. Goldbricque hates shams. Etiquette is death to talent, he says. Goldbricque is eccentric, like all geniuses. He's always broke. That's the way with those clever chaps. He's the kind of man would lend his last dollar to a friend."

"That reminds me that he owes me ten," said Dobley. "Don't you recollect when you introduced me a year ago at Spofoni's? He touched the harp on that occasion after reading my palm."

"What did he tell you?" asked Mrs. Dobley eagerly.

"Oh, he said that I was born to be a leader of men and a few things like that," said Dobley. "He said that had I been in any of the arts I would have stood first; nothing could pass me; then I had a keen insight into finance. He told me I was a lu-lu!"

Just then the waiter brought in a huge bowl of gloomy-looking soup with vegetables floating on top. Freshington began to ladle out the mixture beamingly.

"This is the sort of thing I like," he said with enthusiasm. "No style, no foolishness, no——"

"No salt!" said Mrs. Dobley, tasting her soup.

"It's not the food," said Freshington.

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Dobley.

"It's the lack of pretension, the interesting people around one. There's a man at the foot of this table that was once worth a million."

"He don't look it," said Dobley.

"But he squandered it—squandered it abroad; but just wait till you hear him talk. My! he can talk around everybody in the place. He despises money now. It's almost a craze with him. Listen."

"I tell you," said the once millionaire, "it's this idea of the dollar that keeps art back in this country. Money, money, money. People paint pictures, and write poems, and sculp statues, for what? For what?"

"What's the answer?" whispered Dobley to Freshington.

"Sh-h——" said Freshington. "He's very sensitive."

"For cash," went on the ex-millionaire, as though he were addressing a meeting. "Filthy coin! bah!"

"It's the curse of every kind of talent," said a thin, dark-faced man with a dirty collar; "when

we get away from that idea we can accomplish something in art in America. What is money but degradation?"

"That's Daubington, the artist. Doesn't he talk well?" said Freshington reverently. "Just wait till he gets warmed up."

"How does he manage to get along without money?" asked Mrs. Dobley anxiously.

"Miserable trusts and corporations trying to control us in every direction," went on Daubington. "Last night I found the gas turned off in my studio. Why? Because I hadn't paid the bill. What do I care for that? Will I let it affect me in any way?"

"How did you manage, old man?" asked Freshington.

"I borrowed candles from the janitress, and I'll continue to do it before I will be forced into paying any bills."

"Good for you!" said Freshington. "That man," he said impressively, turning to Mrs. Dobley, "could paint anything he liked. He could make thousands if he wanted to."

"Why doesn't he?" asked Mrs. Dobley, removing a beetle from her vegetable plate.

"He won't work; he's got the temperament of an artist. You cannot do anything commercial if you have temperament. It's impossible."

"I'm sure I don't understand it," said Mrs. Dobley. "Who is the man dining in his shirt-sleeves?"

"That's Holyshow. He's got talent to burn. He has no use for rules. He always puts his feet on the table when he's through dinner. Strong head, hasn't he?"

"Doesn't he ever cut his hair?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"No; he poses for historic characters in studios. It would ruin him if he cut his hair. You see that fellow eating radishes with a hat-pin? He plays the banjo with his feet at a vaudeville show. He's a bird!"

"Genius must be unshackled," said the man with the educated feet. "That's what killed Boggins in my estimation. I was a friend of Boggins's. I may say I made Boggins what he is. I shared his lot when he was struggling at the foot of the ladder, and just as he began to get along through my advice and companionship, what does he do? Why, marry!"

Freshington led the groans that followed this announcement, while the speaker continued brandishing the hat-pin in the air.

"Married a chorus girl who came in first thing and threw his old friends out of the studio and made him move to Harlem," continued the young

man. "Now he goes home on Saturday night and hands his wife his wages like a bricklayer. And she has made him stop drinking! That's Boggins's gratitude. Boggins is dead artistically."

"What peculiar ideas he has!" said Mrs. Dobley in an undertone. "Why shouldn't the man get married?"

"He's a woman hater," said Freshington apologetically. "He left his own wife two years ago. He said respectability stifled him. Oh, he says bright things!"

"Have some of this stewed cat, Honora," said Dobley. "It has a fine flavor."

"The decadence of art," said a greasy-looking man who sputtered when he talked, "is inevitable. Take the creative arts—music, literature, sculpture. Have their greatest exponents come from the Sunday-schools?" He looked triumphantly around.

"Have they, John?" asked Mrs. Dobley. "I used to teach once in——"

"Hush!" said Freshington. "That's Bungstarter, the poet. He's great!"

"No," said Bungstarter, with a violent sputter. "In every genius there has lurked some germ of depravity; a moral viciousness that seems inseparable from accomplishment in art."

"Is he very vicious?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"He's a wonder," said Freshington. "If he weren't situated as he is, he'd be heard of all over the country. He hates work. He had a poem published twenty years ago and it made his reputation."

"Don't talk to me of your Kiplings, and your Howellses," said Bungstarter. "I've no use for 'em!"

"Isn't he brilliant?" said Freshington. "He always talks like that. He married a woman that doesn't understand him. No sympathy. They say she throws china at him when he begins to talk. She takes in dressmaking or something. Poor Bungstarter! I am sorry for him."

"Take this cheese," said Bungstarter, balancing a piece on the end of his knife. "It looks all right, doesn't it? But under a microscope what would we see? Thousands of squirming, swarming little——"

"Oh, how horrible!" said Mrs. Dobley. "And I ate some of it!"

"Swarming squirming things that give it its exquisite flavor, its richness, its taste. It is the same with art. Art is cheese. It must have the worm at the core!"

"Well, I'm going home, John Dobley," said Mrs. Dobley. "I don't wonder his wife don't

understand him! I am sure I don't think it's very nice to talk that way at the table."

"You don't mean to say you're going now?" said Freshington. "Why, they've only just begun."

"I suppose it's horrid; but I can't stand the smoke and the art, the art atmosphere and the cheese," said Mrs. Dobley. "We'll go home. You stay."

"Stay and enjoy yourself, Freshington," said Dobley.

"Don't you want to meet Bungstarter?" said Freshington eagerly. "Professor Bungstarter, let me——"

But the Dobleys had vanished. Going up in the car Mrs. Dobley snuggled to her husband's side like an East Side girl coming home from Coney Island with her beau.

"Do you know, John," she said, "I'm glad you haven't a strong head, because you'd have to wear your hair long and straggly; and I'm glad you haven't a strong face, for then you'd have to go without a shave to look the part. I suppose Mr. Freshington is all right, but I am so glad that we have no temperament—and that you're in the hardware business."

MRS. DOBLEY TALKS

"DID you enjoy the play last night?" ask Mr. Dobley at breakfast, after he had carefu read the criticisms in three papers.

"I rather liked the fairies' dance, in the l act," said Mrs. Dobley; "and the spangl gown the fairy queen wore was too lovely i anything; but I've seen plenty of plays that enjoyed much more."

"But did you grasp the great underlying al gory of the story?" asked Mr. Dobley. "D you understand the hidden symbolism of t thing? Did the 'problem' appeal to you?"

"No, I can't say it did," replied Mrs. Doble "and I noticed that the only thing you applaud during the evening was the fairies' dance, whi was nothing more than a ballet. Then y yawned four times, and stayed out the best pa of the last act."

"I was drinking in the occult beauty of t lines from the semi-darkness in the back of t theatre," said Dobley. "I was pondering ov the 'problem.' Oh, the beautiful mystery of all! Then I wanted to see if it was possible to b

a book of the play, so that I could study it more when I got home. I tell you, it fascinated me."

"I thought it a rather pretty simple little fairy story, pleasantly told," said Mrs. Dobley. "I don't think half the people in an audience care for 'problems' in plays. I am quite sure I don't!"

"The 'problem' in a play," said Dobley seriously, "is like powdered asafœtida in which some chafing-dish experts insist on rolling their broiled steaks. Some don't understand it; others don't like it; but your true epicure gloats over it."

"I didn't see many people in the theatre last night that looked as though they were gloating over it," said Mrs. Dobley. "They all looked sleepy, and between the acts there was that dull and listless atmosphere that never exists when people are keyed up to interest in a play. Then after the first act I heard a criticism from a girl right in front of me that exactly expressed what I thought. They were a young couple from the country, evidently on their wedding trip, and they had observed a dead silence for several minutes after the curtain fell. Then the young man said solemnly:

"'Abigail, what do you think of it so far?'

"'Hiram,' she replied, with equal solemnity, 'I think it comes nearer to nothin' whittled down

to a point than anything I ever seen!' That was the way I felt about it."

"There are many theatregoers," said Mr. Dobley, "who enjoy seeing real sheep, goats, and chickens on the stage. Perhaps that sort of thing would have appealed to Abigail?"

"I'd much rather see sheep and goats and chickens than lots of actors that I've seen," said Mrs. Dobley; "and I think I'd rather see them than a 'problem' play. That is the way with all these new cults. They are so sublime that they verge on the ridiculous. That is exactly how these weird dramas from the German appear to me."

"Oh, the sublimity of the incomprehensible!" exclaimed Mr. Dobley. "Oh, the manacles of convention in art!"

"But what is the object of it all?" asked Mrs. Dobley. "Why not tell the story and point the moral or the motive intelligently in a direct, dramatic, and entertaining style? Who wants to go to the theatre to rhapsodize over something he doesn't half understand? Nowadays people want facts in plays."

"Facts," said Mr. Dobley, "to a symbolist are dramatic warts; facts are unbeautiful; symbolism exemplifies the bubbles of light that rise through the murkiness of human understanding!"

"I suppose you read that in the paper?" said Mrs. Dobley, with a delightful absence of symbolic meaning. "You didn't talk in that way last night! You kept whispering 'Give me the child!' and 'Where are the papers?' and other foolish things during the entire play."

"The 'problem' play," said Dobley impressively, "is the moral lever that is going to move the stage from the mire in which it has been submerged."

"Well, I shan't be there to see the change," said Mrs. Dobley with decision. "I have been to many of these 'problem' plays that in German may be understandable, but when translated are impossible! And, as a rule, they are slow, stupid, talky, and could be changed into a burlesque with hardly an alteration if a good comedian were allowed to interpret the lines and turn the serious current into another channel. I cannot see why an American playwright, when he writes a play that fails abolutely, doesn't say that he took it from a German source, and point out the 'problem.' And then print a synopsis on the programme, so that one could find the thread of the plot."

"Oh, rank dramatic heretic!" sighed Mr. Dobley, shading his eyes with his hands and shaking his head sadly.

"The first 'problem' play I ever saw prejudiced me against all its successors," went on Mrs. Dobley. "I was young and foolish and went to a matinée, expecting an afternoon of unalloyed enjoyment because a favorite star actress of mine was in the leading rôle. I can remember the blank dismay that set in as the play went on. In one interior scene I recollect there was a huge representation of a brick structure that looked as though it might be a crematory, a kitchen-range, or a cemetery vault. This was the 'problem' of this particular play in plain view of the audience. I began to puzzle. Finally I asked the usher what it was."

"That," said Mr. Dobley, "is about the way some people would solve the problems of a beautiful German idyll. I should like to hear an usher's ideas on the subject of a 'problem' play."

"He told me it was a Dutch oven. Now I suppose the introduction of that ridiculous-looking thing that no one seemed to understand meant something."

"It was occult," said Dobley. "The author's purpose—dimly etched—the struggle between earth and—and heaven."

"Heaven typified by an oven? Well, that is certainly good, Mr. Dobley. I've heard of peo-

ple seeing things—but that is too broad a flight for me to grasp."

"No doubt," said Dobley sympathizingly, "but when you thoroughly absorb the beauties of dramatic suggestion, in preference to expression, you will see a new meaning in every puff of smoke, every breath of wind. Each star is a hope; every strain of music is a prayer! It is like learning a new language. Symbolism cannot be learned in a day," said Dobley, "nor can it be comprehended by the frivolous and superficial—the mysticism of the German poets——"

"The mysticism of the German poets—was largely a matter of long pipes and beer, which at their principal university is part of the educational course," said Mrs. Dobley. "The combination induces dreams. Americans are not a nation of dreamers. To one great American dreamer there are a dozen men accomplishing things—pushing out, discovering new countries, and building up big cities and doing things!"

"In the mean time who is writing our great poems and our great plays—what are we doing in literature? Standing still!"

"There will always be fellows to write plays," said Mrs. Dobley, "and to translate them and adapt them, which methods are much more in favor with native playwrights, so long as there is

money to be made by doing so! The greatest poets and the greatest dramatists in the world couldn't write a line if they tried!"

"Exactly!" said Dobley. "Now you are getting to understand symbolism. These German fellows can't write well. It's all in their souls—it's what they are trying to say—that's the idea! They give it to us raw—repressed expression, emotion, strength—there you have symbolism."

"I sincerely trust the method will never become popular with American playwrights," said Mrs. Dobley. "The theatre would become one of the 'White Man's Burdens.'"

"Last night," said Dobley dreamily, "I was so imbued with the beauty of the symbolic play—and the crisp, short style of the problem writers—those short, snappy sentences that leave so much unsaid—oh, the beauty of the unsaid!—that I found myself trying to imagine a great American 'problem' play. Finally I took a pencil and sketched out a little thing that I thought would interest you in its possibilities. I will read it to you."

"Please don't," said Mrs. Dobley, "unless it is funny."

Mr. Dobley took a note-book from his pocket and began to read. "It is called 'The Gold Axe,'" he said.

The first scene is in a woodchopper's hut in a Russian forest. The twins—Mirz and Magda—are seated by the hearth beside the fire. Thunder-storm in the distance. Neither speaks for an hour and a half. Mirz lights a pipe and smokes moodily.

MAGDA—Ah-h-h-h!

She rises and goes to the window and looks out for twenty minutes. Then she comes back to the fire and locks and unlocks her hands as though suffering.

MAGDA—Mirz——

MIRZ—Magda.

MAGDA—Oh—oh—oh—oh!

Mirz hands her the pipe. She puffs at it a few times and hands it back. The thunder-storm grows nearer.

MAGDA—It is nearly out!

MIRZ—The pipe?

MAGDA—No, the fire.

MIRZ—Ha!

Magda rocks herself to and fro; then gets a wooden dish with potatoes in it and peels two. One rolls from the dish to the floor and over to the hearth near the blaze. Mirz kicks it into the embers and shakes his foot in agony. He shudders. A peal of thunder shakes the hut. Mirz rises, takes down a mackintosh and a fireman's hat from the wall.

(Chorus of Unseen Spirits is heard.)

MAGDA—Do not go, brother, I pray.

MIRZ—I must.

MAGDA—Why?

MIRZ—Why?

(Chorus of Spirits and peals of thunder.)

MAGDA—Ah!

MIRZ—Listen!

MAGDA—Well? Well?

MIRZ—Do you not recognize it?

MAGDA—It is the song.

MIRZ—The Song of the Axe——

MAGDA—Let us sing it once again!

A cuckoo clock on the wall strikes thirteen. Magda throws a potato at the bird and bursts into tears. The sun rises. Sunrise effect through window. Chorus of Spirits. Thunder. Mirz begins to sing. Magda joins in. Both dance and do a walk-around. The curtain falls.

Dobley closed the book impressively and looked at Mrs. Dobley, who was gazing at him solemnly as though doubting his sanity.

"What do you think of it?" asked Dobley.

"Much better than the one we saw last night," said Mrs. Dobley. "It has action in it and it's not too literary."

"Do you see the beautiful vague idea—the struggle going on in the two souls? The harmony—the sunrise effect at the end?"

"No, I can't say I do, Mr. Dobley. I wish I could for your sake. But while I recognize the poetic strength and the imagery and the exquisite repression of the style, I don't understand it. Problem plays are too much for me!"

"Me, too," said Dobley. "I'm with you!"

"Then, what have you been talking about?" asked Mrs. Dobley indignantly.

"I wanted to hear what you had to say on the subject, Mrs. Dobley. I wanted some sound arguments to use from a non-symbolic platform. Freshington thinks he's a symbolist, and I am going downtown to have some fun with him. I'll make him explain the meaning of the play. I'm going to tell him it's a new one by Hauptmann."

BUYING A BONNET

"A WOMAN is absolutely helpless when she goes out alone to buy a hat!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley, and Mr. Dobley sighed inwardly, for he knew that this meant that Mrs. Dobley contemplated another millinery purchase, and he had grown to dread these happenings as pecuniary catastrophes.

"Is this the time when the Easter hat begins to bloom tra-la?" he asked, affecting a playful jocularity he did not feel.

"Nobody gets an Easter hat nowadays," said Mrs. Dobley. "The Easter hat is a relic of the time when women bought only two hats a year."

"Oh, happy, happy time!" said Dobley. "Oh, for the days of Used to Be! Oh, for the touch of a vanished hand that touched only twice a year! Oh, the dear, dead past!"

"No, but really," said Mrs. Dobley, "the milliners nowadays never allow a woman to escape——"

"It's something like the Cross of the Legion of Honor, isn't it," remarked Dobley. "Only

they throw them at you like bouquets, and you have to pay for the hats."

"It doesn't matter a mite if there is nothing in the shop that looks well on one or not. They'll sell you something or other."

"Don't you care," said Dobley. "I'm the only real sufferer. I get the bill; you get only the hat. Trouble is merely a matter of comparison."

"But you don't have to wear the hat!" said Mrs. Dobley. "It's torture to a woman to go about in a hat that she knows looks dreadful on her. Yet she doesn't like to rush out and get another hat right on top of the first."

"No, that would be too much like crowding the mourners," said Dobley. "I can see heart failure setting in, in such a case."

"Well, how would you like to have to wear that mink and chiffon toque that I got last month?"

"I shouldn't mind," said Dobley, "at any small function—a fancy-dress party or a vegetable dance. But for business wear or for church I don't think it would be quite the thing. I fear I might attract attention."

"A man can't help buying the right sort of a hat if he goes to the right shop," said Mrs. Dobley, "but a woman loses her head at a milliner's. The hats intoxicate her."

"There are times," said Dobley thoughtfully, "when a man finds that he has bought a gray Alpine with a bandanna band simply because the clerk has told him that the Prince is wearing one at Homburg."

"But they don't dazzle you with stage effects, do they? At an up-to-date milliner's it is just like a matinée."

"Do they throw a calcium on you and play slow music, or what?" asked Dobley.

"Almost," said Mrs. Dobley. "They have little rooms all padded with satin in pink and blue and red and yellow, to suit different complexions, you know. Then there are lots of mirrors that show your head in ever so many different ways. They turn on an electric light and fluff up your hair and give you some sort of cordial in a little cut glass. It's considered very bad form to refuse to taste it."

They never do that at the men's hat-stores," said Dobley; "you pay five for a hat and you have to pay five more for its baptism."

"Only a very homely woman would not look well with all this background. Then they even have a powder puff at some places. And you forget that life is not always padded with pink satin—that you are buying something you must wear in cars and stages——"

"But not on stages?" said Dobley.

"Exactly. Then they bring on their hats and —well you know what hats are to a woman: they wreck her judgment and produce hysteria——"

"I know what they are to a man," said Mr. Dobley. "They wreck his pocketbook and produce a vacuum."

"Then you see yourself reflected a few dozen times about the room."

"It must be an excellent cordial," said Mr. Dobley.

"No—that's the mirrors, you see: but a hat which looks well in this sort of environment usually looks garish in the cold daylight. Then they are willing to tell you that any kind of a hat looks well on you. It is part of the business."

"Can't you circumvent 'em by having the hats sent home by daylight and then send 'em back?" asked Mr. Dobley, with a light as of inspiration breaking over his face.

"What's the use? You only have to go through it all again. Some day a milliner will start a place with an art censor in attendance who will give one a perfectly just opinion on the fitness of a hat for an individual customer."

"I can see that milliner's failure in a week,"

said Mr. Dobley. "A woman would set her heart on one special hat and the censor wouldn't approve. The customer would never go there again. Don't I know the way you act when I criticise anything you buy."

"That's because you never tell the truth about the things," said Mrs. Dobley with reproach. "You just try to say something funny that won't express any opinion at all. Why if you had said one word when I showed you that mink hat I would have changed it—but you only said something foolish."

"It is never foolish to be appropriate," said Dobley.

"I can recollect distinctly coming into the room suddenly and asking you how you liked the mink toque. And you said—what idiotic thing was it you said?"

"I cried 'Meaouw!'" answered Dobley.

"And pray, what did that mean?"

"It meant that I was in a conservative mood, and hesitated to provoke a discussion which would only result in your doing exactly as you pleased in the matter. When I tell you I disapprove of anything you wear, you say I would prefer you to look like a freak."

"Men are always admiring things on other women that they don't want their own wives to

wear!" said Mrs. Dobley. "Just as though I shouldn't much prefer you to give me a frank decision."

"Very well, Mrs. Dobley; hereafter I shall give you a fair verdict. But if our happy home is broken up you must remember that I have always preferred to evade forcing my particular ideas of what you should wear. I should hate to have to wear neckties, waistcoats, and socks that you might pick out. Women always like neat wallpaper patterns and chaste oilcloth designs for men's wear. Hereafter I shall act as censor, by request."

"Then come with me this morning to Mme. Jollyer's," said Mrs. Dobley, "and help me pick out a hat."

"Do you mean that I am to go directly to the lion's den, Mrs. Dobley? I don't mind telling you my opinion, but I should hate to have Mme. Jollyer think that I was trying to spoil her business by giving adverse judgments!"

"Now you're trying to back out!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley. "I knew you would when it came to the point. You are such a good talker I am astonished that you never became a pugilist."

"Your taunts are ill-timed, madam," said Mr. Dobley. "I shall accompany you if you wish. I'm no coward."

An hour later they were in Mme. Jollyer's shop. The proprietress and her assistants fairly beamed. When a customer is escorted by masculinity it usually means a large and quick sale, owing to the man's desire to appear generous and his longing to get out.

But Dobley had a gleam in his eye that meant a terrible resolution to do his duty or die. For the first time he gazed upon the electric-lit satin-padded cabinets that his wife had told him of. He entered one with Mrs. Dobley and was put in a chair at one side, from which vantage-point he experienced a sensation of stage fright when he first saw himself in the mirrored walls from so many points of view. He noted with amazement and some disappointment that the cordial of which Mrs. Dobley had told him was not forthcoming in his presence; but he folded his arms and waited developments.

Mme. Jollyer opened a pleasant conversation upon the new styles from Paris with Mrs. Dobley, while Dobley contemplated, for the first time in his life, the point at which the base of his brain leaned upon the top of his collar. Then the saleswoman came up with several hats poised like birds or floral bunches on her hands and arms. She placed them daintily upon the chairs and made her exit, while the reflections of the

hats in the mirrors produced the effect of a kaleidoscope on Dobley's mind. He began to get dizzy.

Mme. Jollyer perched upon Mrs. Dobley's head a small, jaunty-looking yellow straw with a chiffon scarf and a long-tailed bird. Then she gave it a slight tilt over the eyebrow.

"Very sheek," she said; "too sheek for anything. You'll see nothing like it in New York this spring."

"Only one of the brood?" asked Dobley.

"I beg pardon?" said Mme. Jollyer, while Mrs. Dobley frowned several times from the walls at her husband, in an endeavor to make him desist from his usual mode of conversation.

"I'm referring to the titwillow," said Dobley. "I am something of a sportsman and am interested in the different breeds of——"

"Do you think it is becoming?" asked Mrs. Dobley with another warning glance.

"The aigrette," said Mme. Jollyer, "is an exquisite thing—quite the finest that I have had sent over."

"Did it die in captivity?" asked Dobley; "or was it shot while on the wing, or bringing a bird-seed lunch to its young in the nest?"

"I don't quite understand," said Mme. Jollyer, frowning somewhat in a questioning way.

"Mr. Dobley," explained that gentleman's wife hastily, "is opposed to birds on hats. He prefers them on toast, like most men."

"Suppose," said Mme. Jollyer, as she removed the titwillow hat, "that you try this little rose toque. It is made entirely of crushed roses of varying shades of pink, and has every stage of the flower from the tiny little buds to these full open blossoms. It is a gem!"

She pinned it on Mrs. Dobley's hair, and that lady smiled at her reflection in the mirror. "It certainly is charming—if it is not too young."

"How old is it?" asked Dobley.

"I mean too young for me," said Mrs. Dobley. "It's a beautiful thing, but I am afraid it's just a little youthful for me."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Dobley. "Nobody knows your real age but me, and I'll never dare to tell. With a little care and constant face massage you can manage for a while longer."

Mrs. Dobley laughed in an irritated way, but Mme. Jollyer glared at Dobley as though he had gone out of his senses. Evidently she had no sense of humor. Besides, he was hurting her chance of making a sale.

"It just suits your face!" she said to Mrs. Dobley. "That creamy olive complexion always goes with pink!"

"What do you think about it, Mr. Dobley?" asked Mrs. Dobley with a coquettish glance at her husband.

"I think it has a 'Come-into-the-Garden-Maud' look," said Dobley. "Looks like something a serio-comic would have on when she tripped out to sing: 'Father's Out of Work Again,' or 'Gathering Up the Hayseeds by the Sea,' or——"

"What on earth do you mean?" asked Mme. Jollyer, forgetting her professional courtesy.

"Looks as though it were for stage wear," said Dobley.

"It is for carriage wear!" said Mme. Jollyer haughtily. "I am not showing Mrs. Dobley walking hats."

"Mr. Dobley means for the stage in the theatre," explained Mrs. Dobley; "but it is a darling of a thing."

"I recollect once buying a mink hat," said Dobley thoughtfully, "with a passementerie plume and swiss wings with velours. It fairly fascinated me at first. I wasn't happy till I got it—but then it began to pall upon me. I hated it—I loathed it. It represented all that I desired least on earth. It was a perfect Sapho of a hat——"

"How much is this hat?" asked Mrs. Dobley, seeing Mme. Jollyer's horrified face.

"Thirty-eight dollars," said Mme. Jollyer. "Then there is a little collaret that goes with it which brings it to fifty—the complete set."

"And the—boy—guessed right the very first time!" sang Mr. Dobley, sotto voice.

"Do you think it's too much?" asked Mrs. Dobley anxiously.

"A mere bagatelle!" said Dobley, waving his hand in the air. "Why don't you get a hat that is worth while! I hate a woman in a dowdy hat!"

Mme. Jollyer, taking Dobley's remarks in earnest, hastily took up a big black lace hat with ostrich pompons and jet buckles and placed it athwart Mrs. Dobley's brow.

"Now that *is* a hat!" said Dobley enthusiastically. "I have always wondered why women in choosing hats were content with getting them in such small quantity. A wisp of lace and a few measly buds or an undergrown feather. They pay forty dollars for a thing like that and spike it to their heads and are happy. But that hat you have there represents value. You have weight——"

"It is heavy!" said Mrs. Dobley doubtfully, as though she suspected his sincerity.

"You have a certain area covered in material, a solid mass of value received. Even though a

hat of that sort might not seem as attractive, you can always look at it and say: 'At least I have forty dollars worth of a hat, such as it is.' "

"This hat is one hundred dollars," said Mme. Jollyer. "It is real lace!"

"I knew it was the real thing the minute I set my eyes on it," said Mr. Dobley. "All one would need with a hat like that are a pair of boots and a sword to look as though he had stepped out of an opera. I declare, Mrs. Dobley, if you do not purchase the hat I think of getting it myself."

Mme. Jollyer went off to get more hats. Her eye had grown glassy looking at Dobley, who seemed to be thoroughly enjoying himself. Mrs. Dobley wore a troubled look.

"I declare," she said, "you are not helping me a bit! You are making it even worse than usual, this trying ordeal of buying a hat."

"At least," said Dobley impressively, "you haven't bought a stuffed, dyed cat with a rose in its mouth. Give me credit for saving you from the titwillow on the bough and the dead-march hat with the plumes. I am beginning to feel, Mrs. Dobley, that I am cut out for the rôle of a millinery missionary. Mme. Jollyer, having failed to hypnotize you into buying any of these good sellers, will now delve into her safety de-

posit vaults for something choice and tempting. Hist! Here she comes!"

Mme. Jollyer appeared with three hats. Her manner was a mixture of keen reproach and regret.

"This, I see, is a new vintage," said Dobley. "I am referring to the hat with the grape clusters upon it. I like a nice, fruity hat better than any other sort. A grape or two with a banana and a few cherries. Could anything be more alluring on a woman's head?"

"I prefer the hat with the violets," said Mrs. Dobley, putting it on with a thoroughly satisfied air. "I always did like violets. What do you think of this?"

"That hat," said Dobley, with a critically half-closed eye, "is what I would call a 'peach.'"

"I'll take it," said Mrs. Dobley decisively.

"Have two!" said Dobley. "You like this hat, so get enough of it and you won't have to get another in a long, long time! Be a philosopher. Condense your sorrows and multiply your joys by the simple system of buying enough of a hat you like when you have the opportunity."

"We never duplicate our hats," said Mme. Jollyer coldly, — "even those which we make up here in the shop. This, you know, is not an imported hat."

"Oh, horror!" said Dobley. "What have we done? Picked out an American hat? Oh, la—la—la—la—la!"

"I don't care," said Mrs. Dobley. "I like it."

"It's a nice little hat," said Mme. Jollyer, without much emotion, "a simple little thing!"

"It is true it hasn't that hearse effect that the black hat has—nor the 'Come-Birdie-Come' expression of the other—but just for an ordinary, unanimous hat——"

"How much is it?" said Mrs. Dobley.

"Eighteen-fifty," said Mme. Jollyer.

"'Oh, listen to the band!'" sang Mr. Dobley joyfully, as he dived into his pocket. "No family complete without a millinery censor."

"Well, it's a sweet little hat," said Mrs. Dobley, as they prepared to go.

"It is a hat in a thousand," said Dobley.

"And so long as we picked out such a low-priced one—why——"

"Yes?" said Dobley apprehensively.

"You can take me to luncheon."

"Done," said Dobley.

TROUBLE IN A CHAFING-DISH

"Do you know that next Tuesday is your birthday?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"That's a fact!" said Dobley. "Another milestone passed on life's journey. A birthday used to mean something to me when I was a boy. Now it's only another three hundred and sixty-five days added to last year. No cakes and candies—no feasts—no gifts——"

"Why, John Dobley! I am sure I always remember your birthday, and I don't see why you should speak so despondently about it. I see no reason why one shouldn't enjoy a birthday quite as much when they get on in life. Why I can recollect your birthday last year just as well——"

"Yes, my dear; you never fail to impress the recurrence of my natal day upon me. I also can recollect as clearly as though it were yesterday the box of cigars you gave me last year."

"Tied with pink satin ribbon, wasn't it?"

"Yes, with the picture of an over-fed girl in a hammock two sizes too small for her on the in-

side of the cover. Ah, yes! I remember those cigars!"

"What did you ever do with them. They disappeared so suddenly. Did you smoke them?"

"Smoke them? What an idea! Do you credit me with no sensibility whatever, Honora? You might as well talk of a woman smoking her old love letters or a mother smoking the baby's first shoe. There are some things in life, Honora, that one likes to put away in lavender—like a memory. That's the way I felt about those cigars. I have them in the safe at the office."

"Do you know you are getting quite poetical since you joined the club," said Mrs. Dobley approvingly; "I thought it spoiled cigars to keep them."

"Nothing could spoil those, my dear. They were the limit. They were a theosophical reincarnation of excelsior inwardness and crinkled-crepe outwardness. Nothing could ever touch them!"

"Well, I believe in useful presents," said Mrs. Dobley, "and this year I have decided to give you something useful—something we both have often wished for. Guess what?"

"That five-o'clock tea-table you admired the other day?" asked Dobley.

"No, indeed."

"A set of embroidered luncheon doylies then?"

"Nothing of the sort. I have already ordered a beautiful silver chafing-dish. You've wanted one ever since that night the Van Rippers gave a blazer party. And that suggests an idea. Why can't we celebrate your birthday and have a quiet little supper, using the new dish right on the table, you know?"

"But I've only a few days to practise. I will admit that Van Ripper's performance that evening fascinated me. I'd get stage fright if I tried to do any stunts of that sort without training for it."

"Oh, it's just as easy as possible! You could pick it up in an hour. You just put in the cheese, and a dash of this and that, and a pinch of the other, and stir. The stirring is the secret of the whole thing!"

"Is that a lobster Newburg or devilled kidneys?" asked Dobley.

"Why it's a Welsh rarebit, of course, and you can learn it easily. You can practise it first, you know."

"Sort of dress rehearsal?" asked Dobley.

"Yes; then you must have confidence and act as though you were the only one on earth who could make a good rarebit. That's the way every one does."

"Suppose, after all, that it shouldn't jell or something?"

"Oh, if you are afraid, of course that's different."

"It is not fear; it is natural shrinking from conspicuous defeat. If Van Ripper can make 'em, I can."

"The principal thing is to keep cool and make it your own way. People are always suggesting and criticising the way one makes it. But you keep right on."

"Couldn't we just mix up a property rarebit in the dining-room and have the real thing sent in?" asked Dobley. "It might be safer."

"Why, it will turn out all right if you just follow the directions. They are simplicity itself. I'll give you a recipe I cut out of *The Happy Home Magazine*, and you can read it in the cars so as to get perfectly familiar with the formula."

Dobley took the clipping and read:

"To make a rarebit the following ingredients are necessary: A quarter of a pound of grated cheese, two ounces of butter, two tablespoonfuls of ale, a saltspoonful each of salt and dry mustard, a quarter of a saltspoonful of pepper, and a dust of Cayenne. Mix the ingredients and stir over a fire until smoothly melted to-

gether. Then pour over hot toast on a hot dish and serve at once."

"That's dead easy," said Dobley. "On with the dance! I could make that with one hand tied behind me."

But, despite Dobley's levity, he did not feel quite sure of himself, and for the next few days he talked Welsh rarebit incessantly at the office, at the club, and even to the waiter at the restaurant where he lunched each day. In this way he accumulated such a varied store of information on the subject of rarebits that he felt himself to be an authority on them, theoretically. He was not at all sure of himself in the practical demonstration of his new art, however, and on the day of the blazer he employed himself in bracing up for the ordeal, as though he was going to witness an electric-chair death.

When the Dobleys were at dinner that evening, and Dobley had wished himself many happy returns of the day so often that Mrs. Dobley grew nervous, she said:

"You haven't forgotten the formula I gave you, I hope?"

"Do you refer," said Dobley haughtily, "to that archaic newspaper clipping you gave me? My dear Honora, that is all wrong! During the past few days I have made a study of the Welsh

rarebit in all ages, climates, and conditions. I have discussed the subject with some of the most noted gourmets of the day. From various sources I have culled the newest ideas and improvements that have been suggested by the bright gastronomic minds, and I have pieced this information, bit by bit, until I am prepared to furnish our guests to-night with an epicurean delight which will make Van Ripper's mucilaginous nightmare look like an extinct coin valued at twenty cents less than a half a dollar."

"Hadn't you better drink a little of this bromo-seltzer, John?" questioned Mrs. Dobley nervously.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Dobley?"

"It's good for brain workers, it says on the label. And I do wish you would stick to the old recipe, John—it's simple and easy."

"Too easy," said Dobley jauntily, helping himself to another iced benedictine. "That's the sort of thing Van Ripper makes. By the way, my dear, have you any powdered borax in the house?"

"Borax?" faltered Mrs. Dobley. "What for?"

"In the Up-late Club I understand they always add a pinch of borax to the cheese just as it begins to cream. It adds a zest—a tang to it! You can't make a good rarebit without borax.

I'll send out and get some. Glad I thought of it."

"John Dobley, if you try any of those experiments, you are sure to make a mess of it. Why not ask Mr. Van Ripper to make it? It would be nice for him and safer for us."

"Wh-a-a—t? Ask Van Ripper to make a Welsh rarebit in my own house? Honora, there are times when you seem strangely lost to a proper womanly realization of the dignity of home—the cornerstone of the nation—the altar upon which——"

"I think a little bicarbonate and vichy would be nice for you, John. It clears the brain so. I shall be so mortified if this evening is a failure."

"Trust to me, Mrs. Dobley. You are magnifying a trifling matter to a most alarming proportion. The chef at the Rushemout restaurant says that the main trouble about rarebits is that the things are never ready. There is delay in getting the various ingredients. Now you instruct that cook everything is to be right at hand—no waiting or bother. I will guarantee to do the rest."

"Why, there's only a little cheese and some pepper and salt and butter and ale."

"Ha! ha!" said Dobley. "About Van Rip-

per's rarebits, yes; about mine, no. The rarebit that I intend to make has been compared by a celebrated poet to a dream of melted gold in which are daisied meadows, lowing herds, rosy-cheeked dairy maids singing over the churn as they prepared the amber embryo of the Welsh rarebit."

"Have you ever heard that a spoonful of dry pepper is splendid after dinner, John?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"I have prepared a list of the things so that the cook will have no excuse," said Dobley, handing his wife a slip of paper.

"It looks like a prescription," said Mrs. Dobley.

"Which I wish put up at once," said Dobley jocularly, mixing some Scotch whiskey and Apollinaris in a glass.

In a hesitating manner Mrs. Dobley read:

Cheese—well broken—not grated.
One gill cream.
Two eggs—well beaten.
Hungarian pepper.
Cayenne pepper.
Mustard.
One siphon carbonic.
Two ounces of flour.
Half a lemon.
One bay leaf.

Ale.
Catsup and Worcestershire.
A small funnel.
A wooden spoon.

"Oh, this is horrible!" said Mrs. Dobley; "you can never think of——"

Just then the bell rang, and the Van Rippers were announced; and soon the little party had assembled, and Mrs. Dobley, trembling for the results of the night, had broken the news of the rarebit which her husband had threatened to perpetrate. She also took the precaution to telephone for a supper.

It was nearly midnight when the guests gathered around the Dobley board, which looked like a chemist's shop. They were all very dubious as to the result of their host's culinary skill, and had christened the dish in advance "Dobley's Dream." But that gentleman laughed at their badinage with a confidence which was superb. He started in boldly. Van Ripper made a bet with him that the rarebit would be a failure, and the silence was intense while Dobley lit the double burners and began to whistle softly as the sound of the gurgling water indicated that the cooking process had begun.

"It's all knowing how to do it, old man," said he to Van Ripper; "your rarebit is all right—for

its era. But there are others! Culinary art has advanced with the other sciences—just hand me the eggs, please."

"What's that white stuff?" asked Mrs. Van Ripper.

"The chef of the Phamdool Club claims that a pinch of borax gives a velvety consistency to a rarebit that cannot be equalled," said Dobley, dumping in half a box of mustard, while the guests groaned in unison.

"Are you making a plaster, Dobley?" asked Freshington.

"Ever try any kerosene in 'em, Dob?" asked Van Ripper.

Dobley dusted in the paprika without noticing their sarcasm. He began to stir the mass so violently that particles of it flew around the room and spattered the pictures and the furniture.

"We'll have to get umbrellas if this keeps on," said Freshington. "Go easy, Dobley. There's another day hasn't been touched yet!"

But Dobley was getting excited.

"Bring in that cream!" he said to the maid. "Where's the salt? Freshington, hand me the siphon. Is the toast ready?"

Calling his directions on all sides, he soon had his various guests flying about on all sides of the room for different things. Freshington

brought him a fire-shovel and a whisk-broom, while Mrs. Dobley excitedly handed him a nut-cracker and a book of poems.

Then there was a sudden blue flash that sent the chafing-dish flying and made the guests rush toward their host, who had escaped with a slight singeing. Dobley has always asserted that it was jealousy on Van Ripper's part which made him bring in a sponge and a bottle of naphtha, but Van Ripper says it was simply excitement, and all bets are off regarding Dobley's golden dream.

A MODERN RUBÁIYÁT

"FRESHINGTON," said Dobley, "invites us to join an Omar Khayyám Club that he is organizing. It is to meet one evening every second week for literary discussion."

"What is it all about?" asked Mrs, Dobley, looking up from her embroidery.

"Why, this 'Rubáiyát' of Omar Khayyám that is such a fad just now," explained Dobley. "It's one of those vague, mysterious cults that people are running so much to of late."

"But what is it?" asked Mrs. Dobley, carefully stitching the seeds in a strawberry.

"Why, a club for the discussion of the poem. The idea is to get all the hidden meanings and find out just what Omar was getting at."

"Omar who?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Why, Omar Khayyám, of course," said Dobley.

"Who on earth was he?"

"Is it possible," said Dobley, throwing all the reproach he could into his voice, "that while the whole literary world is vibrating with this poem you do not know about it?"

"Now you know quite well," said Mrs. Dobley, "that I have been too busy getting new things made to give even a thought to such subjects. I'll join the club if you wish, but please tell me about it first."

"My only object in joining the club," said Dobley, "would be to give me ideas upon the subject of Omar. While he lived in the eleventh century, he was a perfect type of what is known to-day as a pipe-dreamer. Pipe-dreamers live in a world of their own and are united by a subtle bond of sympathy, whether they live in the eleventh or the nineteenth century. Omar's poem lay dormant for several hundred years, and then poets of the same school began to translate it. Then it became a fad, and at present it is quite virulent."

"But are the verses pretty?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"They are pretty as words strung together in rhyme may be," said Dobley; "and the beauty of this poetry of the hasheesh school is that it doesn't have to mean anything. So the translators have strewn capital letters thickly through the verses, and it makes it positively weird. When you see the word 'thought' or 'say' occurring in a poem, it doesn't impress you as being wonderful, but you just put a few capitals

in the middle of sentences and you make people think."

"But don't you think it will conflict with the original ideas of the club if you start into throwing down their idol the first thing?"

"I don't care if it does. Freshington has invited me to enter the first evening's discussion without even questioning my opinions. He takes it that I am like everybody else, Khayyám mad."

"How do you purpose to bring out your ideas?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Simply by bringing the 'Rubáiyát' down to date. Omar brought all sorts of commonplaces into his poem and put them side by side with the loftiest flights of fancy. It was the greatest mix-up on record."

"But I cannot understand how you are going to make it plain to the other folks, who will think you don't understand the true meaning of the poem?"

"I have thought out a novel and unique method," said Dobley; "I have written a spring poem——"

"A spring poem!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley. "I never knew you were a poet."

"You don't have to be when you write 'Rubáiyáts,'" said Dobley. "You just let your mind get thoroughly out of control and then wander

on. Now, the 'Rubáiyát' that I have prepared, if it be unearthed and translated into another language ten centuries from now, will, perhaps, seem quite as vague and as beautiful——"

"Perhaps," suggested Mrs. Dobley.

"That's what I said. Perhaps," returned Dobley. "My idea is that Omar was really writing for one of the comic weeklies of the eleventh century."

"Did they have them then?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Certainly," said Dobley; "that's where they get all their jokes from. They have fellows translating the old files all the time and working them over into modern form."

"Is your 'Rubáiyát' humorous?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"It's not intended to be anything but dreamy," said Dobley. "It has no purpose. But there may be vague, hidden meanings in it that I am unaware of myself. The mystic poets never really know what they mean when they are writing. It takes their readers to find out the unutterable depth of it all. For instance, Omar constantly alludes in his work to jugs, mugs, bottles, and their intoxicating contents. He even goes so far as to say that he cannot imagine why the vintners sell their wines for the reason that

he knows of nothing so precious that they could buy, which sentiment if uttered by a modern poet would call down the criticism of any number of temperance societies. My private opinion is that Omar was a somewhat disreputable old party; a Bohemian of the eleventh century who preferred to loaf around singing under the trees to staying in the shop making tents."

"Was he married?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Let us hope so," said Dobley. "His historians, however, evade all record of his domestic life. And those who are putting him up as an idol are trying to make him out a saint as well. I can't imagine a married saint."

"Nor I," said Mrs. Dobley; "but I am getting anxious to hear your——"

"My version?" asked Dobley. "You understand, of course, that there have been others. But it's getting to be the thing to add to the bunch. Do you really think you would like to hear mine?"

"If it is not too long," said Mrs. Dobley.

"Oh, Mrs. Dobley! Mrs. Dobley! When will you ever get beyond that Mother-Goose taste for short poems? One would think you were still in pinafores. My version is only seventeen verses long, quite brief in comparison to those others by McCarthy, FitzGerald, Le Gallienne, and the

other fellows that made the first translations, but were never heard of."

"If I don't understand it, I am sure to get tired and yawn," said Mrs. Dobley.

"If you do," said Mr. Dobley profoundly, "it will be the highest compliment you could pay me. It will prove that my version is the real thing. A 'Rubáiyát' that could be understood like a primer would be a joke."

"Well, go ahead!" said Mrs. Dobley resignedly.

Mr. Dobley extracted a roll of manuscript from his pocket and began to read in a low, intense voice, as though he were intoning a litany:

THE MODERN RUBÁIYÁT.

(*Dobley's Version.*)

Hark! For the message cometh from the King!
Winter, thy doom is spoke; thy dirges ring,
Thy time is o'er—and through the Palace door
Enter the Princess! Hail the new-crowned Spring!

Comes she all rose-crowned, glowing with the Joy
Of Laughter and of Cupid, the God-Boy;
Buds bursting on the bough in welcoming
To Her we Love, whose loving will not cloy!

List! From the organ rippling in the Street
Come sounds rejoicing, glad Her reign to greet.
The Shad is smiling in the Market Place
And eke the Little Neck! Ah—Life is Sweet!

Come, let us lilt a Merry Little Song
And in an Automobile glide along

Into the glory of the Year's new Birth.
Hasten! Oh, haste! For this is Spring, I Think!

Come where the Bonnets bloom within the Grove
And let us pluck them for the One we Love;
Violets and Things and chiffon-nested Birds.
Tell me—didst ever see a Glass-Eyed Dove?

Think you how many Springs will go and come
When We are Dead Ones—and the busy Hum
Of life will never reach us—Nothing Done
And Nothing Doing in the Silence Glum!

"I think that sounds very slangy," said Mrs. Dobley.

"Perhaps it may to the unthinking," said Dobley, "but not to those who go below the surface of things. It is impossible for a mere reader to express the occultism that lurks in a free sprinkling of capital letters. Are you beginning to comprehend the wandering dreaminess of the style?"

"Not quite," said Mrs. Dobley. "I never saw a shad smile. Did you?"

"Tush, tush!" said Dobley; "that's the Oriental imagery of the thing. Of course it doesn't really mean shad. I've spelled it with a capital."

"Well, what does it mean, anyhow?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"That," said Dobley, "is for the club to find out. If this version of mine once gets them won-

dering at what I mean, it will be in all the book-stores in flexible covers, so that people can carry it round in their pockets and study it in the horse-cars."

"Please go on," said Mrs. Dobley. "I really am getting interested in it."

Dobley, much pleased, continued impressively:

Listen! The cable car's Gay Gong has rang,
The Elevated on its perch, A-clang
Like to a District Messenger astir.
Thought you, it was a Nightingale that sang?

Ah! My Beloved, when it's Really Spring
We know it by the Buds a-blossoming,
Signals from earth to sky—Tremendous Sounds
That might to Some mean any Ancient Thing!

Then let us to the Caravan at Once,
The Sawdust where the Peanut haunts
The air with strange sweet Odors
And the Elephant does Wild and Woolly Stunts!

Asparagus is glowing on the Stall,
The Spring lamb cavorts on the Menu tall;
Strawberries ripe—a Dollar for the Box:
Wouldn't it jar You somehow, After all?

A Book of Coon Songs underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Dozen Buns, and Thou
Beside me singing rag-time? I don't know?
I wonder would a dozen be enow?

"'Enow'?" interrupted Mrs. Dobley. "What does that mean?"

"'Enough,' of course," said Mr. Dobley.

"Well, why didn't you say 'enough'?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"Why, simply because it wouldn't rhyme," said Mr. Dobley.

"Well, why don't you make the other thing rhyme?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"It's too beautiful as it is!" exclaimed Mr. Dobley. "It's too Persian. Besides, it shows a disregard for mere poetic rules. Only poets that write on space have to write according to rule. When you get to be really great, you can play tag with rules."

"And 'haunts' doesn't rhyme with 'once,' and 'stunts' doesn't rhyme with either of them," said Mrs. Dobley triumphantly.

"They do when you read them quickly, and that is the way I intend to read them at the club," said Dobley; "only people with small minds notice such things, anyhow!"

"Well, go on," said Mrs. Dobley. "I am quite anxious to hear how it ends!"

"It doesn't end. It just stops," said Dobley.

"Well, then, I am anxious to hear it stop," said Mrs. Dobley.

Mr. Dobley looked pityingly at his wife, and continued:

I sent my soul afling through Joy and Pain
For Information that the Winds might deign:
Softly the breezes pitched it, Rusie-curved,
And whispered slowly—sadly—"Guess Again."

> Sometimes I think the flowers that they fling
> Are the last graces we the Fair need bring;
> So we Today—we make the most of it
> I think it's just the sweet for anything!

"That's a pretty verse," said Mrs. Dobbley.

"Yes, so it is," said Dobbley, "and the next I have introduced as a hint at Fresington. I intend to look steadily at him and read it very slowly:

> What of Tomorrow—say you? Oh, my Friend—
> Tomorrow's Not been Touched. It's yet to spend.
> Often wonder if we should expire
> If we could not fulfill the Joint we Lend

"That's rather cute!" said Mrs. Dobbley. "Do you think he will see the hidden meaning in it?"

"If he does," said Dobbley, "I don't care if he misses all the rest!"

"That's not the end, is it?" asked Mrs. Dobbley.

"No," said Dobbley, "there is a certain sadness about the concluding verses:

> Ah, Love! Could Thou and I Creation rule,
> How Different our Scheme! The Summer's sun
> Would see another Springtime blossoming,
> Another Summer's Rose to Follow On!

> And Leaning from the Sky a Little Star
> Would Tell Us from the Canopy afar
> What now we Grope for in the Dinky-dink,
> And wonder blindly, vaguely, What we Are!

And when Alone you dream your fancies ripe,
Thyself all Hasheesh-fed—My Prototype!
Smoke Up—and when you gather with the Group
Where I made One—Turn Down an Empty Pipe!

"I wonder if they will understand it," said Mrs. Dobley.

"It doesn't matter if they do or not so long as they appreciate it," said Dobley, folding his manuscript.

"But will they see the point?" persisted Mrs. Dobley.

"I hope not," said Dobley; "that is, all but Freshington."

IN WHICH THE DOBLEYS ELOPE

DOBLEY came into the sun parlor of the Pinehurst Inn, Pinehurst-in-the-Pines, where Mrs. Dobley sat crocheting a golf waistcoat. She looked approvingly at her husband, who wore a pink coat, knickerbockers, and vivid plaid stockings. He had no hat with him, because it was an unwritten law at the Pinehurst Inn that no hat should be worn with golf or polo costumes, and Mrs. Dobley insisted that it was bad taste to depart from the customs of the place.

"Good boadig, by dear," said Mr. Dobley; "I've jdus bed dowd to the lake. Lovly boadig! Egscuze by dawkig through by dose, bud I've codragted a bad coad id by head!"

"How beautiful the air is!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley. "How fragrant the breath of the pines! How restful it all is!"

"Almost like a grave," said Dobley, being interpreted into ordinary talk. "I am so completely rested that I feel depressed. And these peculiar costumes that a man must wear—really, it makes me feel as though I were part of a comic opera."

"I can't understand how it is that you object to dressing as everybody else does," said Mrs. Dobley. "There are certain social conventions that one must respect at a place of this sort."

"I don't see why I should make a chromo of myself in order to add a touch of local color to this hotel," said Dobley. "I tell you, Mrs. Dobley, I feel like a Turner sunset—and I don't like it."

"Why can't you settle down and enjoy the advantages of the place?" said Mrs. Dobley. "The air——"

"Oh, yes; there always is the air, somehow," said Dobley. "Somehow we can't get away from it. But for my part I long for my happy New York home. And the circus is in town!"

"There is nothing very remarkable about that, is there?" said Mrs. Dobley. "It comes every year. It's an old story."

"So is the sunrise an old story," said Dobley, "and the moonlight. An old story—ever new. The coming of the circus is as full of spring suggestion to me as the shy crocus lifting its head above the tender earth."

"Well, I hate the circus," said Mrs. Dobley. "It's all very well for children, but it's too silly for sane, grown-up people."

"There it is," said Dobley. "You women will

insist on aging yourselves by outgrowing every youthful pleasure. To me the circus is a brimming fountain of perpetual youth."

"If they would only get something fresh," said Mrs. Dobley, "but it's always the same old thing. When you've seen one circus, you've seen——"

"I presume from your remark that you have already seen the seal orchestra—vocal and instrumental?" asked Mr. Dobley.

"No, I haven't," said Mrs. Dobley curiously. "What is it like?"

"You have much to live for, then," said Dobley. "If you ever heard the seal contralto—the only one in the world—sing 'Because I Love You' to an accompaniment of drum, cymbals, a tambourine, and a bell, you would never sneer again at the circus."

"How perfectly ridiculous you are," said Mrs. Dobley. "How could such a thing be possible?"

"Simplest thing in the world," said Dobley. "The tank is rolled into the ring while the band plays some catchy operatic tune. The seals emerge on a sliding cellar-door arrangement, and gliding each to its place, bow gracefully to the audience. The instrument that each is most proficient in is fastened to one of its flappers, or flippers—I don't know which term is technically correct. A rack containing a sheet of music is

attached to the neck of each seal, and after a brief prelude the voice of the seal contralto rises in exquisite cadences to the roof of the tent. I have heard her sing 'Ben Bolt' in a manner to bring tears to the eyes."

"It must be very remarkable," said Mrs. Dobley.

"It almost outdistances the Letty Lind dance of the baby elephant," said Dobley. "That marvel of poetic motion! Light as thistledown, its dainty feet flash upward amid a mass of swirling skirts——"

"Skirts!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley.

"Skirts—most assuredly, Mrs. Dobley. I believe that skirts are usually a feature of a Letty Lind dance."

"But an elephant! I cant't believe it."

"Nor could I until I saw it," said Dobley. "It used to be considered a great thing for an elephant to stand on a tub and wag its tail and trunk in time to the 'High-School Cadets,' but at the circus now in town the elephants play poker with real chips, do a cake-walk, and go through a one-act play written for them."

"What wonderful animals they are!" said Mrs. Dobley thoughtfully. "I would like to see that dance."

"And the man who rides a bicycle down a

flight of several thousand steep steps, setting off skyrockets and pinwheels with his hands and feet at the same time. It is truly marvellous! And the clowns! Oh, those funny fellows! I laughed more at the last circus I went to than ever before in my life."

"Was it so very funny?"

"One of the incidents makes me laugh even to recall it," said Dobley, chuckling. "A clown gets in an altercation with a countryman who happens to be walking around the ring. They dispute about the proper way in which to ride a bicycle, the clown failing to keep the wheel going at all. The countryman enters the ring—and, of course, every one is prepared to see him outdo the clown in stupidity."

"Yes?" said Mrs. Dobley.

"But here the audience is treated to a surprise. After several very comical struggles with the bicycle the clothing of the countryman becomes torn and disarranged, and finally comes off——"

"Well?" said Mrs. Dobley.

"Displaying a full suit of spangled tights. The countryman, who, of course, is an expert rider, then does marvellous tricks upon the wheel. Can you imagine anything more exquisitely planned? For originality and superb subtlety I think that cannot be equalled."

"It must be very amusing," said Mrs. Dobley.

"The clown then proceeds on his way around the ring," went on Dobley, "and finally becomes involved in a heated discussion with a man who is sitting up among the very highest of the tent girders. No one has noticed this man before, strangely enough, until the clown calls attention to him. He evidently is some intoxicated person who has chosen this odd and dangerous method for observing the performance. The clown, forgetting his clownish character in his indignation, tells the man to come down. The man evidently returns some abusive reply. Suddenly the clown takes a revolver from his pocket and, aiming deliberately at the man's heart, fires."

"Gracious!" said Mrs. Dobley. "Does he hit him?"

"Every time," said Dobley. "The man falls with a thud, while a thrill of horror runs through the audience."

"Dreadful!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley.

"That's where the joke comes in," explained Dobley gleefully. "It's a stuffed man."

"A stuffed man? How horrible!"

"I mean a dummy. Just a suit of clothes stuffed with excelsior, and a mask and a hat. Oh, it's the funniest thing ever was thought of! The audience simply screams with laughter.

"Then the trained birds that fly out in the audience and drop little envelopes containing one's fortune are rather pretty," said Dobley. "The last one I got told me that I would marry a dark man, who would be insanely jealous of me."

"How can they tell?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"They can't. That's where the fun comes in," said Dobley. "It's all part of the circus. But if they do happen to strike it, it makes you think."

"I should think that would be lovely!" said Mrs. Dobley.

"The dog-faced girl isn't pretty, of course," said Dobley, "but she's interesting in her way. Then she makes all the other women seem like beauties. She answers questions and tells you how old she is."

"How old is she?"

"She's been sixteen now for some time," said Dobley,—"about eight years, I think. Before that she used to be the Bearded Lady. She doubles in the parts, I believe—Bearded Lady at the matinée and Dog-faced Girl at the evening performance. They've found that the children like the Bearded Lady best, while the Dog-faced Girl is more of a favorite with evening audiences.

"There is a child rider that is simply a mar-

vel," said Dobley. "He rides on a white horse and does the most dangerous and daring feats, such as standing on his head while the horse is at full speed. The ringmaster is the child's father, I believe, and his anxiety about the boy is pathetic. The boy slips very often—oh, very, very often for such a good rider, and it seems as though he is within an inch of breaking his neck. The audience gives a short breath, and the ringmaster starts forward as though to save the boy, but the lad just pulls himself together in time and waves his hand, and goes on just as though nothing had happened."

"How perfectly sweet!" said Mrs. Dobley. "Have they anything else that is interesting?"

"Only the bear who walks on the tight-rope and smokes a pipe, but that is really tame, and there is a rumor that it is a man dressed up as a bear. I believe he forgot one day and bowed to a man in the audience that he owed money to, and gave the whole thing away. He nearly fell off the rope when he realized what he had done. But they couldn't afford to part with him because he does the whirling dervish in the second part of the performance."

"What is the whirling dervish?"

"Well, I've often wondered myself," said Dobley thoughtfully.

"What does he do?"

"Just whirls."

"What for?"

"I don't know. He likes it, I suppose."

"Does the audience like him?"

"I don't think they like him so much as they respect him. There is nothing lovable about him, and he turns around so fast you can't see his face, and you don't know whether he's got a happy disposition and whirls for fun or just for his health."

"I'd like to see him," said Mrs. Dobley.

"He's dressed like a Hindoo priest, if you are to believe the programme, and he comes out and turns a somersault and then climbs on a little tub arrangement and begins to spin around with his skirts flying around him."

"Does the audience applaud him?"

"They forget him after he's been going an hour and a half, and get interested in something else. I think that every one feels that any one could whirl if he practised long enough. But what's the use of it? What good does it do in the world?"

"Does he seem dizzy when he stops?"

"Not a bit. He seems chagrined that he isn't making more of a hit. You see, he doesn't realize that the public gets tired of too much of a

good thing, especially when it's so similar. If he introduced a kick now and then or anything to make variety—but it's the most monotonous thing!"

"It must be funny," said Mrs. Dobley, beginning to giggle. "Perhaps there's a wheel on the tub with places for his feet? Where did you say this was?"

"A place called New York," said Dobley. "There are no pines there, though, and the air is distinctly germy."

"What time does the performance begin?"

"About eight," said Dobley, with ill-concealed joy. "We could just catch that train at 7:10 and make it."

"But that wouldn't give us time to dress," said Mrs. Dobley.

"I'm sure I'm dressed to kill," said Dobley. "I'll make the biggest kind of a hit just in this costume."

"It would be exactly like an elopement!" said Mrs. Dobley, her eyes sparkling. "We could just get our hats."

"Why wear hats?" said Dobley. "Why not introduce this influenza-breeding Pinehurst fad? Besides, whoever saw people stop for hats when they eloped on the stage? Let us do this up brown."

"Oh, we must have hats!" said Mrs. Dobley.

"If you insist upon it," agreed Dobley, "but it won't be an up-to-date elopement."

"We'll tell no one where we are going," said Mrs. Dobley. "That would spoil it all."

"No, let us try and avoid attention as much as possible. You go quietly and get a hat. I have mine hidden under my waistcoat. I put it on when I get out of sight of the hotel, and take it off when I see any one coming."

"What an idea!" said Mrs. Dobley. "Well, then, what shall we do?"

"You sit here and I'll come back and act as though I didn't know you. Don't pretend to recognize me. When you see me take a cigar from my pocket, bite the end off it, and strike a match, that will be the signal."

"For what?" said Mrs. Dobley nervously.

"For the start," said Dobley. "I'll go out the back way——"

"You'll have to go through the cellar."

"All the better. I'll cut across the woods to the depot and wait. In the mean time you go out heavily veiled and take a hack, and tell the driver to go by a roundabout course to the station. See?"

"Yes! Yes!"

"I won't recognize you when you get there. I'll just bite my lip."

"Why?"

"Because they always do that in plays when they elope. When the train comes, you get in the parlor car and I'll board the baggage car."

"Yes? I wonder if we shall be able to get good seats?"

"I have already procured a box," said Dobley, diving into his pocket, "and this I shall give to you for safe-keeping."

Mysteriously he handed his wife a small paper bag. She looked wonderingly at him.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Peanuts," whispered Dobley. "Sh—h! Not a word!"

PATENT TAGS

"And don t forget the labels for checking the trunks," said Mrs. Dobley as she bade her husband good-by on the piazza, and he started to catch his train for town. "When one is moving from one hotel to another at this season of the year it is very important to have trunks plainly labelled and carefully checked."

"I'll bring the labels," said Dobley; "but this trunk-checking is all a hideous mistake. What are the express companies for, anyhow? It is much more businesslike to have a trunk expressed directly to its destination."

"I've always checked my trunks and had them with me on the same train," said Mrs. Dobley. "It seems safer. You always know they are there when you arrive, too."

"Yes, and you always rush around like a wet hen at stations, tracking the thing up, or you have me do it. I tell you, it's all a mistake. I'll demonstrate this trip that trunk-checking is losing its popularity with up-to-date people."

"Very well," said Mrs. Dobley, "but it will be

the first time in my life that I ever travelled without checking my trunk."

"Never too late to make a good beginning, my dear," said Dobley, stepping jauntily into the hack that was waiting for him. "Just let your Uncle Dud manage this, will you?"

The train was late, so Dobley stepped into the express office at the station and gave the agent a cigar.

"I'm trying to find out something, expressman," he said. "My wife says that the only way to travel is to check a trunk and take it along with one on the train as baggage, you understand. Now, I think it's better to ship it direct from one address to another, more economical and quicker. For instance, I want to go from the Out-of-Reach Hotel here to the High-Ball Inn at Hazelhurst on Saturday. My wife and I have three trunks. Now, what is there gained by all the bother with trunk checks and chasing those trunks around at every station?"

"The cost is about the same," said the station agent, "but it's less trouble to let us handle the trunks. You see, you have to have them transferred in the city anyhow, and that's what counts."

"Exactly," said Dobley. "Well, I'm through with the checking system. You send up to the

Out-of-Reach for those trunks Saturday morning. See? And let me have a few tags."

"Have you seen the new patent tags?" asked the agent. "They are perfect. It's an idea of my own."

He took out a metal-framed tag with a leather strap to it. "Isn't that neat?" he asked Dobley.

"It's a peach," said Dobley.

"You see, this card is of celluloid, and you can write and erase on it with a lead-pencil. On this first card—it slips out, you see—you write your city address, where you want it to be sent if it should ever get lost; that is the emergency tag. Now over this slips another celluloid tag, and on this you write the name, date, and the place of shipment. See? On the top card is your name, date, and the place where you want your trunk to go. A trunk with one of these tags on it will come back from the other end of the earth."

"What's that in gilt on the back of the tag?" asked Dobley.

"That's the name of the check. I've had it patented. 'You can't lose me.' The boys have got to know this tag along the road, and they look out for trunks that have them on."

"What do you ask for them?" asked Dobley.

"A dollar each," said the agent.

"I'll take three of those," said Dobley. "Is this the Slingemfast Express Company?"

"No, this is the Crashemup."

"I didn't know you went to Hazelhurst," said Dobley.

"Neither we do. We transfer to the Slingemfast."

"Good enough," said Dobley. "See how quick you can rush those trunks through on Saturday. I have a bet with my wife about it."

Dobley corded the trunks himself and attached the new tags, carefully filled out. He explained them to Mrs. Dobley and gave her the keys.

"Now, all you have to do is to hang on to those and look happy," said Dobley. "The Crashemup Express will do all the worrying."

The Dobleys reached Hazelhurst that night and asked the porter of the High-Ball Inn to send up their trunks. But he came back and said they hadn't arrived.

"Didn't I tell you?" said Mrs. Dobley. "That's always the way when you don't check trunks."

"There must be some mistake," said Dobley. "There were three trunks, each with a new metal tag containing a celluloid card with my name and the address of this hotel on it."

"Let me have the checks," said the man, "and I'll hunt them up."

"There are no checks," said Dobley. "We expressed them right through. You couldn't miss the trunks. They had those new tags. You've seen the new metal tags, haven't you?"

"No," said the porter. "We use the old kind that you tie on with a string."

"Well, hustle those trunks along when they get here," said Dobley. "They'll probably get in on the next train."

But they didn't arrive, and the next day the Dobleys had to wear their travelling things. Dobley borrowed a collar, and his wife breakfasted, lunched, and dined in a soiled shirt waist. She said she knew she never would see her things again. Dobley went down into the cellar of the hotel and hunted for the missing baggage.

"There was three trunks that came here yesterday," said the porter, "and the expressman took them away again. He said they were addressed wrong."

"Oh, those weren't my trunks," said Dobley. "The address on mine was plainly written on one of those new tags. Keep a sharp lookout for them as the trains come in."

"Funny about those trunks of mine," Dobley said to the head clerk later in the day.

"Didn't you get your trunks?" asked the clerk. "That's funny. Front! Tell the porter to send up Mr. Dobley's trunks right away."

"He can't do it," said Dobley. "They're not on the farm."

"Well, they came here all right," said the clerk, "for I paid $9.80 for them and have the receipts."

"Nine—nine doll—oh, you must be mistaken," said Dobley. "Those can't be my trunks!"

"Well, here it is charged up against you," said the clerk. "Mr. Dobley, baggage express, $9.80."

"What did you pay any such price as that for?" asked Dobley. "Did you think I was buying the trunks? Who authorized you to pay my bills, anyhow?"

"We always pay our guests' express bills unless we are instructed not to," said the clerk haughtily. "Here are your receipts."

Dobley took the yellow slip and read mechanically:

THE SLINGEMFAST EXPRESS.

To transportation of three trunks—our charge, $4.80; advanced charge, Crashemup Company, $5. Total collect, C. O. D., $9.80.

"Well, where are the trunks? That's what I

want to know?" said Dobley, as the porter came up with a worried look and an open book in his hand.

"Those must have been your trunks that went back," said he.

"Back? Back where?" shouted Dobley.

"I dunno," said the porter. "He said they'd have to go back. There was no names on them and no address, and no checks for them."

"Well, there was a new tag on each of my trunks," said Dobley defiantly. "So they can't have been mine. A new metal-framed tag!"

"There was tags, sor; but no names. It just said——"

"Well, what did it say?"

"'You can't lose me,' sor; that was all."

Dobley groaned. "Why didn't you look on the other side of the tag?" he asked. "How many different kinds of a fool are you, anyhow?"

"Oh, come now, Mr. Dobley, we can't let you talk to our porter that way," said the head clerk. "It's not our fault, you know, if you don't tag your trunks properly."

"Why did you pay for expressing the trunks here to me without seeing they were here?" asked Dobley, getting incoherent in his rage.

"We don't see all the trunks that come in, my dear sir; they come in downstairs. People should

have checks for trunks if they want to keep track of them. Better call up the company on the 'phone."

Dobley got the Crashemup on the wire and began a spirited talk with a polite clerk at the other end.

"I want my trunks," he shrieked. "What do you mean by charging me $9.80 for expressing three trunks to me when I don't get them?"

"How much did the trunks weigh?" asked the clerk.

"How do I know?" snapped Dobley. "Do you think I put 'em on the scales before I sent 'em?"

"We regulate our charges entirely by weight," said the polite clerk. "Your trunks must have been overweight."

"Oh, rubbish!" said Dobley. "Unless you get those trunks down here right away I'll sue the company. Do you understand?"

"Were the trunks properly tagged and addressed?" asked the clerk.

"Each trunk had a new celluloid tag in a metal frame. The tag contained cards with my town address; the address of the Out-of-Reach Hotel, from which they were shipped, and the name of the High-Ball Inn, where they were to be sent."

"As much as that?" said the polite clerk.

"One address is less confusing at one time on one trunk. Was there anything else on the tags? I'll make a note of the matter and send out a chaser after the things."

"There was an inscription in gilt on each tag."

"What was that, please?"

"'You can't lose me.'"

"I beg your pardon. What was that?"

"'You can't lose me!'" shouted Dobley.

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"Look here, young man, there's nothing funny about this, do you understand? 'You can't lose me' was printed on the tags."

"Perhaps they sent the trunks there," suggested the clerk.

"Sent them where?" shrieked Dobley, with some profanity that made the wire hum.

"To the place you mentioned just now," said the clerk.

"Oh, —— —— —— —— —— ——!" said Dobley, slamming the receiver back on the hook.

He went upstairs and found his wife washing out her stockings and handkerchiefs in the wash-bowl. She said if the trunks didn't come she would have to go in town and buy a new outfit the next day.

In the morning the mail brought Dobley a neatly typewritten postal card, which said:

DEAR SIR: Regarding the complaint made by you over the telephone yesterday as to claims for lost trunks and alleged overcharge of expressage, we beg to say that we have placed the matter on our list for investigation, notification of which will be forwarded to you in due time. Should you have occasion to write us on this matter again, please mention this number, 32,568, File B.

Respectfully yours,
THE CRASHEMUP EXPRESS COMPANY.

"In the mean time we are expected to do without our clothes!" snarled Dobley over his breakfast. "My dear, put on your hat and come to town with me, and we will visit the office of the Crashemup and let them know that we are not to be humbugged in this way."

The Dobleys went to the city in a dejected and worn-out frame of mind. When they visited the Crashemup place, Dobley handed the clerk the receipt. The clerk looked it over carefully.

"This is not our affair, my dear sir," he said. "You must see the Slingemfast Express people. We have nothing to do with their bills, their breakages, or their lost trunks. Another thing, this receipt states that the trunks were received at the High-Ball Inn. We can only go by the receipts in matters of this sort, you know. Any one could come in here and say that we had lost their trunks. We simply transferred your bag-

gage to the Slingemfast, as I understand it. You will have to give us time to investigate this thing."

"In the mean time what do we do for our clothes?" yelled Dobley furiously.

"My dear sir, I cannot suggest anything except that in future you mark your trunks plainly. We handle thousands of trunks each day without losing one. There at the door you can see one of our vans on its way to an outgoing steamer. You can imagine the value of that load which is entrusted——"

"Where are they going?" said Mrs. Dobley.

"They are going to one of the German steamships that sails this afternoon," said the clerk. "You see, madam, you need have no fear that any trunks that are sent in our charge——"

"Why, there are our trunks!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobley, pointing to the top of the van. "Can't you see the marking on the end, 'Dobley,' just as plain? What on earth are they doing there?"

"They are on their way to Germany," said the clerk.

"Not much!" said Dobley. "Those are our trunks, and we'll have them or wreck this place!"

"It is entirely irregular for us to interfere with our vans when they are starting out from this office," said the clerk. "There must be some mistake. They have all been O. K.'d."

"Oh, please let me have my trunk!" pleaded Mrs. Dobley, while her husband went out and wrangled with the van-driver until the trunks were brought down on the sidewalk.

"They are them, all right!" said Dobley, mopping his brow.

"Where are the patent tags?" asked Mrs. Dobley.

"The tags are there," said the driver, "but there's nothing on them except this"—he turned them over and showed the gilt-lettered inscription: "You can't lose me."

"We thought this might be some place in Germany," said the driver. "We can't let trunks collect around here this time of year, so we thought it best to ship them."

"Where are the celluloid cards with all the addresses?" said Mrs. Dobley.

"Blessed if they haven't all dropped out," said Dobley. "Just get us a dozen or so of the old-fashioned tags that you tie on with a string and call two cabs; we'll not lose sight of these trunks again till we reach High-Ball Inn."

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